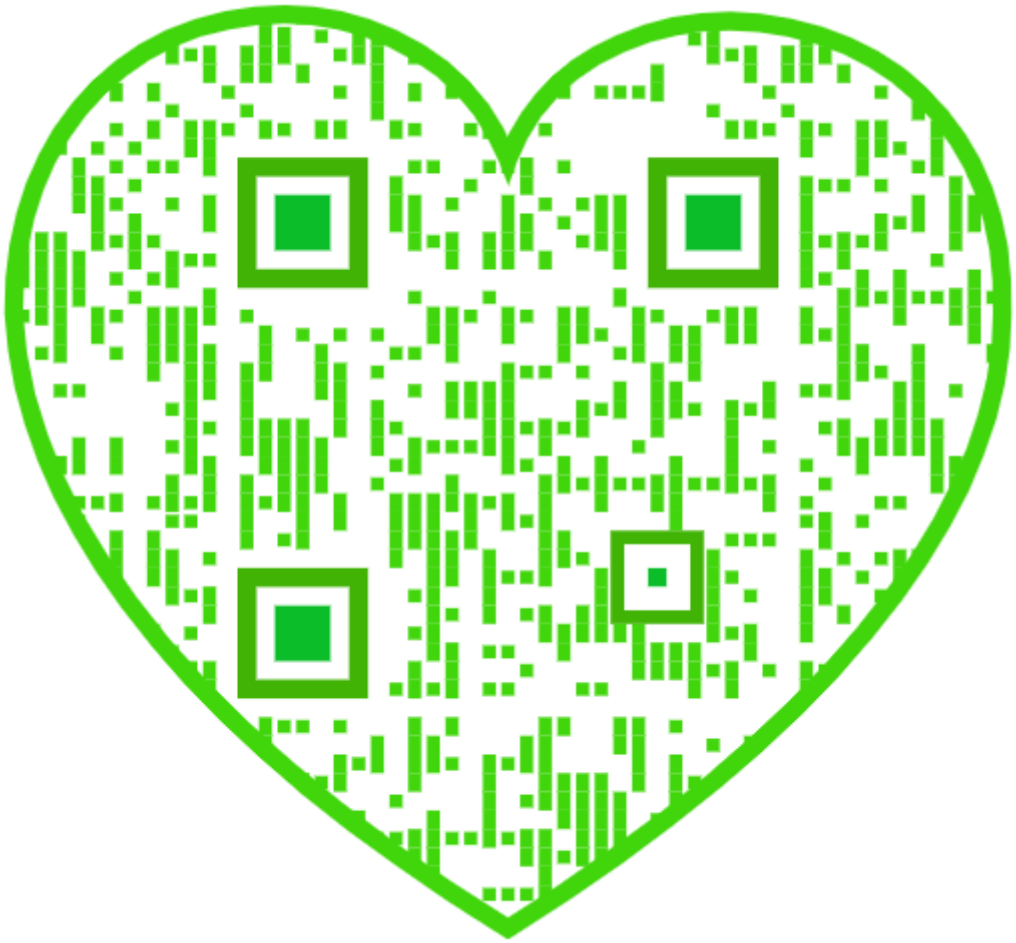

# BENEDICTINE MONACHISM

## STUDIES IN BENEDICTINE LIFE AND RULE

BY THE

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# PREFACE

VIOLLET-LE-DUC has said: 'Regarded merely from the philosophical point of view, the Rule of St Benedict is perhaps the greatest historical fact of the Middle Ages.'[1] Great authority though he was on the Middle Ages, there may be some demur in accepting this verdict. But certainly there will be no demur in recognising that St Benedict's Rule has been one of the great facts in the history of western Europe, and that its influence and effects are with us to this day. This being so, it is surely strange that, as I believe, the Rule has never yet been made the object of an historical study setting forth on an extended scale its principles and its working. Commentaries there are, explaining it chapter by chapter; but so far as I know, there is no systematic exposition of what may be called the philosophy, the theory, of the Benedictine rule and life, no explanation of the Benedictine spirit and tradition in regard either to its inner life or its outward manifestations.

The present volume is an effort to supply this want. It consists of a connected series of essays covering the most important aspects of Benedictine life and activities. It is addressed, of course, primarily to Benedictines; but it should appeal to wider circles—to students of the history of religion and civilisation in western Europe, as an account of one of the most potent factors in the

[1] *Dictionnaire de l'Architecture*, I, 242.

formation of our modern Europe during a long and important phase of its growth : and also, in a special way, to those scholars and students who hold the Benedictine name in veneration.

As there is a certain presumptuousness in venturing to treat an evidently complex and difficult subject, that has hitherto, perhaps, deterred explorers, it may be well for me to set forth the credentials I bring to the undertaking of the work. In the first place, then, I have been for more than forty years a Benedictine monk, living the life according to the Rule, and trying to shape my spiritual life and my intellectual and other activities by its inspiration and teaching ; and during the last twelve of these years I have had the experience of ruling as Abbot over a large monastery. All through my monastic life my study of predilection has been the domain of monastic history and literature, both general, especially the early phases, and Benedictine in particular ; and I have devoted some years to the preparation of an edition of the text of the Rule itself. Moreover, I have made visits, sometimes of considerable duration, at Benedictine monasteries in Italy, Switzerland, France, the Rhineland, Bavaria, Austria, Hungary, Belgium ; so that I have had the opportunity of seeing the actual working of modern Benedictinism in all its manifestations, as found at the present day throughout Europe.

With this necessary apology for my boldness, I commend my work to the judgement of the Reader.

CUTHBERT BUTLER

DOWNSIDE ABBEY,
*6th May*, 1919

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# LIST OF WORKS

THIS is not a list of all the works used in this volume; still less is it a bibliography for Benedictine history, which may be found in Max Heimbucher's *Orden und Kongregationen der kath. Kirche* (Paderborn, ed. 2, 1907, vol. i). It is a list only of the small number of books whose authors' purpose has been more or less the same as my own.

Of modern Benedictine writers the one to whom I owe most is Cardinal Gasquet; and if I seem to have pillaged his *Sketch of Monastic Constitutional History*, it is because the doctrine is so sound and so clearly set forth, and will carry more weight coming from him than from another. Moreover, it is not easily accessible, having appeared as Introduction to a new edition of the English translation of Montalembert's *Monks of the West*, 6 vols. (1895); the edition was soon sold out and seldom occurs in second-hand catalogues.

The book most akin in scope to mine is Dom Besse's *Moine Bénédictin* (1898): see my notice in *Downside Review*, 1899.

Dom Morin's *L'Idéal monastique* (1912), translated into English, is a series of 'conferences' covering much of the strictly religious ground.

Abbot Wolter's *Elementa Praecipua* (1880) should be named. The text, when printed apart from the mass of 'pièces justificatives,' fills only 120 pages of large type. It is a hortatory and devotional exposition of the practical side of Benedictine theory. In chapters XV and XVI I criticise adversely the last section, 'Regimen'; the rest I read with general agreement.

Abbot Delatte's *Commentaire* (1913) is appraised on p. 182 and elsewhere; it has been very helpful.

Abbot Herwegen's *Der heilige Benedikt* (1917) came to my hands too late for me to make any use of it. It is the best modern sketch of St Benedict.

It will be of interest to name also two writers who view monasticism from outside with a critical though not unfriendly eye; they both write with wide and accurate knowledge of the literature, old and new, and with sympathetic understanding: James O. Hannay (clergyman of the Church of Ireland), *The Spirit and Origin of Christian Monasticism* (1903); Herbert B. Workman, Principal of the Westminster Training College (Wesleyan), *The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal* (1913). Both books are frequently referred to in these pages.

# CHAPTER I

## ST BENEDICT

ONE morning, in the early spring of the first year of the century, I was standing at a cave, looking out into the darkness that still enshrouded the scene. And as I looked the first streaks of dawn began gradually to lift the shroud of night and to reveal, first the rugged mountains across the ravine that lay beneath my feet; and then the cruel naked rocks, with never a tree or shrub to soften their austerity, surrounding the valley on all sides; and at last the wild grandeur of the scene in its solemn simplicity and solitude. And as the features of the landscape gradually took shape, my thoughts went back to a youth who just fourteen centuries before had passed the years of opening manhood in that cave, and on many such an early spring-day morning, belike in the first year of the sixth century, looked out on the same wild, grand, austere scene that was unfolding itself beneath my eyes. And the thought of that youth, that boy, arose in my mind—what he could have been like, who had the courage and the strength to live for three years in that cave, feeding his young heart on God alone; what must have been that spirit, what that soul, that could brave, and endure, three such years of solitary formation for the work God called him to do.

St Benedict was born somewhere about the third quarter of the fifth century; the year 480, traditionally given for his birth, is no more than an approximation, but it may be accepted as representing the date with rough accuracy. The only fixed chronological point in his life is the year 542, when he was visited by the Gothic king Totila at Monte Cassino; it is clear he was then advanced in years, and it seems he died not long after. All that we know of the facts of his life

is what St Gregory the Great tells us in the Dialogues, the second book of which is wholly given up to St Benedict. St Gregory assures us that his information was derived from authentic sources, the reminiscences of four of St Benedict's own disciples whom Gregory had himself known. The Dialogues is in some ways a trying book to the modern mind; but the outlines of St Benedict's life may be traced from it with entire security.[1]

St Benedict was born at Nursia, then a municipal town and the seat of a bishopric, on the slopes of the Sabine Apennines: the modern name is Norcia, in the province of Umbria, not far from Spoleto. St Gregory says he was born 'liberiore genere,'—of gentle family, we should say,—words suggesting the wealthy country gentry of the provinces, but not patrician or senatorial rank, and thus excluding the late fable that St Benedict was of the great Anician family. He was in due course sent to Rome to pursue in the Roman schools the studies of a liberal education; but disgusted and horrified at the general licentiousness prevailing in Rome, 'he withdrew the foot he had just placed in the entry to the world; and despising the pursuit of letters, and abandoning his father's home and property, desiring to please God alone, he determined to become a monk' (St Gregory). In accordance with the monastic ideas of the time, his resolve was to retire to a desert place and be a hermit. So he fled secretly from Rome and wandered through the hills of Latium, until he came to the ruins of Nero's palace and the artificial lake at Sublacum (Subiaco) on the Anio, some dozen miles beyond Tivoli and thirty miles from Rome; and here he found the cave that was suited for his purpose.

It has been usual to represent St Benedict as a mere boy at the time of his retirement from Rome; but those recent Benedictine writers are almost certainly right who have maintained that 'puer' means not a child but a young man;[2] for it seems clear that while in Rome he was old enough to have been in love (Dialogues, ii, 2). It is altogether more probable that he was of undergraduate rather than of school-boy age.

[1] Modern Lives of St Benedict are Abbot Tosti's *S. Benedetto*, 1892 (translated into English and French), and Dom L'Huillier's *Patriarche S. Benoit*, 1904.

[2] Tosti, Schmidt.

The year 500 may be taken as an approximate date for Benedict's withdrawal from the world and inclusion in the Sacro Speco at Subiaco.

There in his cave we shall leave him awhile, in order to take a brief survey of the condition of things social, civil, and religious in Italy at the time, so as to have an understanding of the framework in which his life was set. The picture is one of decay, disorganisation, and confusion perhaps without parallel in history.[1] The disintegrating processes that had been at work during the latter days of the Republic had gone on in ever-increasing volume during the Empire, and at last assumed vast proportions. Italy had become pauperised and depopulated: the ceaseless wars at home and abroad had thinned the population; the formation of huge estates worked by slave labour had crushed out the yeoman farmer class; oppressive taxation had ruined the provincial middle classes; the wholesale employment of barbarous mercenary soldiers, who in payment for their services often received allotments of the land of Italy, established in the country an element of lawlessness and savagery that was a perpetual menace to the inhabitants. The land was devastated by famines and pestilences, till by the end of the fourth century great tracts had been reduced to deserts, the people had become demoralised and degenerate, agriculture and education had well-nigh died out, and society was corrupt to the core. And then, to complete the ruin, began the long series of invasions of Italy by Teutonic and other barbarians. In 400 came the Visigoths under Alaric and swept over northern Italy; five years later came Radagaisus and his Goths, who were exterminated near Florence; in 408 Alaric returned and this time came to Rome, which he besieged thrice in three successive years, and gave up to plunder and sacking on the third occasion (410), and then penetrated to the southernmost parts of Italy. At the middle of the century the savage Huns, under Attila, the 'Scourge of God,' ravaged the valley of the Po (454), and Gaiseric the Vandal took and sacked Rome (455). A series of minor incursions into Italy, Alans, Herulans, and others

[1] What follows is in large measure based on Hodgkin's *Italy and her Invaders*.

from the north, and Vandals by sea from the south, followed in swift succession. Ricimer at the head of the Teutonic mercenaries of the Roman army besieged and sacked Rome (472), and four years later these same mercenaries demanded that one-third of the land of Italy should be given them; on refusal they broke into revolt, seized and plundered Pavia and Ravenna, made their leader Odovacar or Odoacer the ruler of Italy during seventeen years, and from him received the coveted third of Italian land.

In 489 came Theodoric and the Ostrogoths, and there ensued a four years' war between him and Odoacer over the length and breadth of northern Italy, the chief cities being in turn sacked, and other hordes of barbarians pouring into Italy to take part on either side of the fray. In 493 Theodoric slew Odoacer with his own hand and became ruler of Italy, recognised as such by the Byzantine emperor. Under Theodoric and his successor the desolated lands of Italy and the exhausted and decimated population experienced for a generation a respite from the horrors of invasion and war, and a period of recuperation. Theodoric reigned for thirty-three years, till 526. He was a strong and enlightened ruler, and with the assistance of his minister, the Roman Cassiodorus, he set himself to repair the evils that had befallen Italy. His policy is thus characterised by Hodgkin: 'the maintenance of peace and tranquillity, and the safeguarding of all classes of his subjects from oppression and violence at the hands either of lawless men or of the ministers of the law.'[1] As part of this policy, till the last three years of his reign, though an Arian, he gave religious toleration to the Catholics. It is to be noted that the beginnings of St Benedict's monastic institute were made during this brief period of peace and rest for Italy.

And then, soon after Theodoric's death, Justinian conceived the idea of reuniting the Western Empire to the Eastern, and sent his great general Belisarius to wrest, first Africa, and then Italy from the Barbarians and restore them to the Empire. Belisarius landed in Sicily in 535 and passed to Italy the next year. Then began a long period of unparalleled suffering for the whole of the unhappy Peninsula.

[1] *Op. cit.* iii, 248.

Naples first was taken, and then Belisarius entered Rome. A twelve months' siege of Rome by the Goths ensued and proved ineffectual. A desultory warfare of four years began, in which the chief cities of Italy—Rimini, Urbino, Orvieto, Milan, Fiesole, Osimo, Ravenna—were in turn besieged; while 100,000 Franks descended into Italy, attacking impartially both Goths and Romans, plundering and sacking indiscriminately, till a pestilence, that carried off a third of their number, compelled them to retire across the Alps. These years, 537-542, were a time of misery for the Italian peoples that baffles description: the entire country went out of cultivation, and famine, starvation, and pestilence raged throughout the land.

At this time Totila became king of the Goths (541), and the war broke out again all over Italy; Florence and Naples and many another city were besieged and taken, and then began Totila's siege of Rome (545). It lasted for a year and more, the inhabitants enduring the extremity of hardship and famine, till in December 546 Totila entered Rome animated with the grim resolve utterly to destroy the city and raze it to the ground. He pulled down great portions of the walls and prepared to fire the public buildings, when he stayed his hand and marched his troops out of Rome, carrying with him all, literally all, of the miserable remnant of the Romans, 'suffering not a single person to remain in Rome but leaving Rome absolutely desolate,' so that 'for forty days or more, no one, either man or beast, remained there.'[1] For six years more was the war continued between the Roman generals and Totila with varying fortunes all over southern Italy, Rome being reoccupied by Belisarius and again besieged by Totila, unsuccessfully in 547, successfully in 549. Then after ravaging Sicily and suffering defeat at the hands of Narses, Belisarius' successor, at Gubbio in Umbria, Totila died in 552. The following year the remnant of the Ostrogothic race in Italy was brought to bay by Narses near Mount Vesuvius and was there annihilated, 553. The very next year the Alamans made an incursion, penetrating as far as Capua, where they also were defeated and almost destroyed by Narses. And

[1] Quoted from Procopius and Marcellinus Comes, contemporary historians, by Hodgkin, iv, 507.

then in 568 came the Lombards, who for half a century and more ravaged, harried, devastated the whole Peninsula from sea to sea. But this was after St Benedict. His life tallied almost exactly with the period of Ostrogothic dominion; for he was born but a few years before they came in 489, and he died a few years before their destruction in 553.

If we extend our survey over the rest of the Western Empire we shall see that the calamities of Rome and of Italy only symbolise those of the provinces. During the two centuries from 400 to 600 covered by the foregoing sketch, what was happening in Italy was happening throughout western Europe. Everywhere was going on the same round of invasions, of internecine warfare between the Teutonic races, of ravages, famines, pestilences, sieges, sackings, burnings, slaughterings—all the horrors of war, utter destruction of the civilisation and institutions of Rome, unspeakable misery and destitution. Gaul, Spain, Britain—it was the story of Italy repeated, for the invasions of Italy were but incidents in the progresses of the various barbaric races through Europe. The Visigoths, and the Huns, and the Vandals in turn swept through Europe in the first half of the fifth century, to say nothing of the lesser peoples that preceded or followed them. At the date of St Benedict's birth the Teutonic settlements may be described thus: Italy formed the kingdom of Odoacer, whom the mixed multitude of revolted Teutonic mercenaries in Roman armies had set up as king; but he was destined to be in a few years overthrown by Theodoric and his Ostrogoths, then occupying what now is Hungary and the lower Danube lands. The Visigothic dominions extended over Spain, except the north-west corner, whither they had driven the Suevi, and over the southern and central parts of Gaul to the Loire. The south-eastern parts of Gaul, the country of the Rhone, formed the kingdom of the Burgunds. The north of Gaul and of the Rhineland was held by the various tribes of the Franks, still pagan, like the Angles and Saxons, whose conquest of Britain was in progress. The pagan Alamans held Switzerland and the Black Forest, and had pressed their way almost to the heart of Gaul; while in the great German background hovered the pagan Frisians, Saxons, Thuringians, Lombards, all destined to play their

part in the making of Europe. Finally, in northern Africa, the Vandals had established their kingdom, which included Sardinia and Corsica.

In such a time of upheaval and confusion it is needless to say that the bonds of morality were relaxed and society sunk in a deep corruption. The barbarous Teutons had indeed the vices, but had also the virtues, of the savage. Salvian of Marseilles (*cir.* 450) balances the virtues and the vices of all the principal races: 'not one of these tribes is altogether vicious; if they have their vices, they have also virtues.' It is the Romans, the relics of a luxurious and effete civilisation, that are altogether bad. 'You, Romans and Christians and Catholics, are defrauding your brethren, are grinding the faces of the poor, are wallowing in licentiousness and inebriety.' 'Shall we be surprised if God gives all our provinces to the barbarians, in order that through their virtues these lands may be purified from the crimes of the Romans?' In short, the vices of the Romans are the real cause of the downfall of the Empire.[1] The picture is one of deep corruption of life and manners in the Roman world, and it shows forth the degenerate Roman populations as more vicious and more depraved than their wild conquerors.

Nor was the religion of the Western Empire in better plight than the morals. In such a time of relaxed morality and material and social catastrophe no high religious level can be looked for. The Teutonic nations were in St Benedict's time still in great part pagan, and those that had accepted Christianity were Arian; both races of the Goths were Arian, as also the Vandals and Suevi, and later the Lombards. The Franks alone, converted about 500, were Catholic. This meant that in St Benedict's lifetime, in Italy, in southern Gaul and Spain, Arianism was the religion of the dominant races. The Teutonic settlers in all these countries constituted a large proportion of the population, for they were no mere invasions of armies but migrations of nations. Catholicism was buried beneath these populations of heresy.[2] In many

[1] Quoted from Salvian's *de Gubernatione Dei*, by Hodgkin, *op. cit.* i, 918-34. Dill, *Roman Society*, 318-23, thinks that Salvian's pictures are overdrawn, but he does not question the substantive truth of his thesis of the deep corruption of Roman society. Cf. also Gregorovius, *City of Rome*, i, 252.

[2] See Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 'The Church of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries,' § 1.

parts the Arians carried on long and bitter persecutions of the Catholic Church, and throughout Arianism was held fanatically by the conquering races. Thus the religious map portraying the western Europe of 485 shows it all pagan or of Arian ascendancy, fully Catholic districts being only in the north-west corner of Gaul and in Wales and Ireland.[1]

In St Benedict's Italy the religious situation may be summed up thus: a Catholic substratum of the remains of the old Roman or Italian population, overlaid by numerous settlements of dominant Arian Teutons of many races (like the Protestant Plantation of Ulster, except that during Theodoric's reign there was toleration for the Catholics); and underlayers of still surviving paganism, for paganism lingered long and died hard in Rome itself, and long survived in the remoter districts, as appears from St Benedict's own life.

And so in the year 500 there was a Europe to be reconverted, christianised, civilised anew; law and order to be restored; the fabric of society to be rebuilt; the dignity of labour to be reasserted; agriculture, commerce, education, the arts of peace to be revived; civil and political life to be renewed: in short, a Europe to be remade. And the man marked out by Providence to play in the ultimate event a giant's part in the colossal work of reconstruction, had left the world never to return, and was spending the years of opening manhood in his cave at Subiaco, with none other thought in his mind than 'the desire to please God alone' (St Gregory).

After three years passed in entire solitude in the Sacro Speco, Benedict's existence became gradually known to the shepherds and country folk around; and then disciples began to come and place themselves under his guidance, so that a community of monks grew up, in such numbers that in the course of a few years he was able to establish in the neighbourhood twelve monasteries of twelve monks each, with abbots whom he appointed. At this time, too, Roman nobles, even of patrician rank, began to entrust their sons to his care, to be brought up as monks. Before long the influence he was rapidly and widely gaining stirred up the jealousy and enmity of a neighbouring priest, who manifested it in such wise that

[1] See Heussi-Mulert, *Atlas zur Kirchengeschichte*, v.

Benedict determined to yield to evil and go elsewhere with a selected band of monks, leaving the twelve monasteries at Subiaco in charge of their superiors. The little band travelled southward till it reached the Roman municipal town of Casinum, half-way between Rome and Naples. Behind it rises abruptly from the plain a mountain standing solitary, of considerable height. On the summit was an ancient fane of Apollo, where still lingered on among the mountain folk the relics of their pagan worship. Benedict and his monks climbed the mountain, and cut down the sacred wood, and turned the temple of Apollo into a chapel of St Martin, and established there their monastery, destined to be the one before all others associated with St Benedict's name, ever after looked on as the centre of Benedictine life and spirit, the Holy Mount of the Benedictines, whence flowed over Europe streams of religion and civilisation and culture.

Some year about 525 is a likely date for the foundation of Monte Cassino. The remaining years of his life, perhaps some five-and-twenty, St Benedict passed there, to us at this distance a dim patriarchal figure standing out colossal through the centuries. We catch in St Gregory's pages glimpses of him working in the fields with his monks, or sitting reading at the monastery gate, or spending the hours of the night in prayer, or ruling and guiding his monks. We see him preaching to the half-heathen folk of the country-side, and alleviating the sufferings of the poor in the famines and pestilences of those troublous times, always a centre of beneficent influence to whom men turned naturally in their difficulties. Often must he have watched from his mountain top the Roman and Gothic armies in the plain below, as they marched and countermarched through the land, spreading havoc and desolation around them. He became the most notable personage in the district, the one whom Totila desired to meet in 542, and from whom he received in patience a stern rebuke that made him henceforth less cruel (St Gregory). We read in St Gregory's picture the beautiful story of the last visit of his nun-sister, Scholastica; how when night began to fall and Benedict prepared to say adieu and return to the monastery, Scholastica prayed, and God sent such a storm of rain that her brother had against his will to stay, and so they passed the night

together in holy converse on the spiritual life. We read too of the wonderful contemplation St Benedict had from the tower, a contemplation expressed by St Gregory in language so extraordinary that theologians, and among them St Thomas, have discussed whether it was really a foretaste of the Beatific Vision, and Benedict, like Moses and St Paul, for a moment saw the Being of God; an experience in any case so exalted and so spiritual that it makes good his claim to a place in the ranks of the highest and most gifted of the mystics.

Finally, there is the picture of his death; how being overcome by fever, he caused himself to be carried to the oratory by his monks, and there being fortified for death by the Body and Blood of the Lord, his feeble body supported in the arms of the monks, he stood with hands upraised to heaven and breathed his last breath in words of prayer. And the monks saw a path stretching straight from his cell to heaven, strewn with rich garments and bright with lamps. And One radiant, of venerable aspect, standing above declared: This is the path whereby the beloved of the Lord, Benedict, hath mounted up to heaven.

# CHAPTER II

## PRE-BENEDICTINE MONACHISM

IN order to understand St Benedict's place in the history of monachism and to appreciate the significance of his reconstruction of monastic life in the West, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the monasticism that went before him and of its developments up to his time. No attempt will here be made to sketch the history of early Christian monachism: this has been done with knowledge and eloquence by Montalembert in the *Monks of the West*, in the chapters on Monastic Precursors in East and West.[1] Our purpose is this: there have been in the monastic movement from the beginning certain conflicting ideals, tendencies, currents, and the course of monastic history has been in large measure but the external manifestations of the interplay of these forces; it is here sought to define the most fundamental of these primitive ideals of monastic life, and to estimate their action and development up to the time when St Benedict wrote his Rule. I have treated of this subject more fully elsewhere;[2] what follows will be for the most part reproduced from what I have said before: the details and references will be found in my work on the Lausiac History named in the note. If it be desired to control what is here set forth by reference to historians of monasticism who stand outside the movement and criticise it from an independent standpoint, no better books in English can be recommended than those of Hannay and Workman, mentioned in the List of Works.

[1] On the whole subject-matter of this chapter I may refer to Abbé Pourrat's excellent study, *La Spiritualité Chrétienne*, 1918; also to Dom Leclercq's art. 'Cénobitisme,' in *Dict. d'Archéologie Chrétienne*.

[2] *Lausiac History of Palladius*, part i, 230-51; Cambridge *Medieval History*, vol. I, xviii, 'Monasticism,' and more briefly, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (ed. 11), art. 'Monasticism.'

St Anthony's claim to his traditional title of 'Father of Christian Monks,' after being challenged by the critics of a generation ago, is now once again recognised by the historians of monastic origins.[1] The inauguration of Christian monachism is to be dated from the day on which he came forth from the ruined fort by the Nile, wherein he had passed twenty years of solitary seclusion, to organise and guide the numerous aspirants who had betaken themselves to the neighbourhood and were calling on him to be their teacher in the monastic life. The traditional date is 305, and it may be accepted as roughly correct. The monachism that derived from St Anthony was eremitical in character. This type, which I shall call the Antonian, prevailed throughout northern Egypt, from Lycopolis (Asyut) to the Mediterranean. St Anthony was a hermit in the full sense of the word, and his disciples were hermits like himself; or, if they lived in loose congregations, as in the great monastic settlements of Nitria and Scete, their life continued to be semi-eremitical.[2] It is possible from the pages of Cassian and Palladius, who both spoke from personal acquaintance, to reconstruct a fairly full picture of the system.

There was a vast number of monks in Nitria, Palladius says 5000, some of whom dwelt in the inner desert of 'the Cells.' These last were hermits in the strict sense of the word, living out of earshot of one another, and coming together for divine worship on the Saturdays and Sundays only.

[1] *Lausiac History of Palladius*, part ii, Introd. § 1.

[2] The term 'eremitical' describes the life of the hermit, the man of the desert (Gk. *ἐρῆμος*, *ἐρημίτης*; Lat. 'eremita,' to which the aspirate was capriciously prefixed, whence Eng. hermit). Anchoret (Lat. 'anachorita'; Gk. *ἀναχωρητής*, one who has retired from the world) also means a solitary, and is indistinguishable from hermit. 'Solitarius' also is used, as by Cassian. Cenobite, on the other hand, is one who lives the 'common life' (Gk. *κοινόβιον*, life in community). The word 'monk' has a curious history: originally it meant a solitary (*μοναχός*, from *μόνος*); but in course of time it was extended to cenobites, and ultimately came to be applied principally to them, so that cenobite is now its predominant connotation. The Greek word 'monazontes,' and also 'renunciantes,' are used for monks generically.

Similarly with monastery: *μοναστήριον* was originally the abode of a solitary, while *κοινόβιον*, coenobium, was the place of the common life; but monastery came to be used freely for coenobium, and finally supplanted it in Latin; for coenobium, though employed by Jerome and Cassian and once by St Benedict, passed out of currency in Latin; coenobita, however, always remained in common use. A 'laura' (purely Eastern) was a monastery whose monks dwelt in separate cells or huts within the enclosure.

In Nitria itself the monk might at choice live either by himself or in the same dwelling with one or two or several of his brethren. Here also the monks assembled in the great church for divine worship on Saturdays and Sundays only; on other days they celebrated the offices apart in the separate cells and monasteries. On this system every man was left very much to himself and his own discretion: 'they have different practices, each as he is able and as he wishes' (Palladius). There was no rule of life. The elders exercised an authority; but it was mainly personal, and was a predominance of greater spiritual wisdom. The society appears to have been a sort of spiritual democracy, guided by the personal influence of the leading ascetics; but there was no efficient hold upon individuals to keep them from falling into extravagances. The monks used to visit one another frequently and discourse, two or three or more together, on Holy Scripture or on the spiritual life. At times, too, there were general conferences in which a large number took part. Moreover, as occasion arose, one would give another a broad hint or a practical rebuke, if he observed anything in his conduct of which he disapproved. A young man would put himself under the guidance of a senior and obey him in all things; but the bond between them was wholly voluntary. The purely eremitical life tended to die out; but what took its place continued to be semi-eremitical.

The spirit, the dominating principle of this monachism, may be thus characterised. It was a spirit of individualism. Each worked for his personal advance in virtue; each strove to do his utmost in all kinds of ascetical exercises and austerities, in prolonging his fasts, his prayers, his silence. The favourite name to describe any of the prominent monks was 'great athlete.' And they were athletes, and filled with the spirit of the modern athlete. They loved to 'make a record' in austerities, and to contend with one another in mortifications; and they would freely boast of their spiritual achievements. One who had seen them describes the Nitrian monks as 'surpassing one another in virtues, and being filled with a spirit of rivalry in asceticism, showing forth all virtue, and striving to outdo one another in manner of life.' But it is in Palladius' account of Macarius of Alexandria that this spirit shows itself most conspicuously: 'If he ever heard of any one

having performed a work of asceticism, he was all on fire to do the same'; and Palladius illustrates it by examples. Did Macarius hear that another monk ate nothing but one pound of bread a day? For three years he ate each day only what broken bread he could extract in a single handful through the narrow neck of a jar. Did he hear that the monks of Pachomius' monastery ate nothing cooked by fire throughout Lent? He did the same for seven years. Did he hear that their observance was 'great'? He did not rest satisfied till he had gone to see, and had beaten them all. Thus the practice of asceticism constituted a predominant feature of this type of Egyptian monachism. Their prolonged fasts and vigils, their combats with sleep, their exposures to heat and cold, their endurance of thirst and bodily fatigue, their loneliness and silence, are features that constantly recur in the authentic records of the lives of these hermits, and they looked on such austerities as among the essential features of the monastic state.

Almost contemporaneously with St Anthony's becoming the institutor of a systematised eremitical life in northern Egypt, St Pachomius established in southern Egypt a cenobitic type of monastic life. The first Christian cenobium, or monastery of the 'common life,' was founded and the first Christian monastic rule was written by him about the year 315. In his own monastery the community was very large, numbering several hundred monks. They were divided into separate houses of thirty or forty monks, each with its own superior, its own cellarer or bursar, its own chapel and refectory; and only for the more solemn offices did the entire community assemble in the great church of the monastery. The life in the houses was a common life under minute and even meticulous written rules; but the voluntariness and system of private venture had play here also. Palladius visited a Pachomian monastery at Panopolis (Akhmīm), and describes how the tables were laid and meals served each hour from midday to evening, to suit the various grades of asceticism in fasting practised by the monks; and St Jerome speaks of their voluntary abstinence from the common food provided, and says that if any liked to absent themselves altogether from the common table they were free to do so, and might if they preferred

have bread and water and salt provided for them in their cells every day or every second day. The Rule said: 'Allow them either to eat or to fast.' In short: the fundamental idea of St Pachomius' Rule was to establish a moderate level of observance which should be obligatory on all, and then to leave it open to each, and indeed to encourage each, to go beyond the fixed minimum, according as he was prompted by his strength, his courage, and his zeal.

In another respect the Pachomian monks differed from the Antonian, namely, in the place that labour held in the life. Palladius tells us how he saw the Pachomian monks working in the fields and in the garden, and plying all the trades and handicrafts, as smiths and bakers and carpenters and fullers and tanners and shoemakers and tailors. Here we have a fully constituted and indeed highly-organised cenobitical life, the day being divided between a fixed routine of church services, Bible reading, and work seriously undertaken as an integral factor of the life. Herein lies one of the most significant differences between Antonian and Pachomian monachism. In the former the references to work are few, and the work is of a sedentary kind, commonly basket-making and linen-weaving, which could be carried on in the cell; and it was undertaken merely in order to supply the necessaries of life, or to fill up the time that could not be spent in actual prayer or contemplation, or the reading of the Bible. Palladius' picture of the Pachomian monastery, on the other hand, is that of a busy, well-organised, self-supporting, agricultural and industrial colony, in which the daily religious exercises only alternated with, and did not impede, the daily labour that was so large an element of the life.

It was necessary to bring out thus in detail the two primitive types of Egyptian monachism, with their differences and agreements, as the tendencies and ideals they embody have run through the whole course of monastic history. The rest need not be laboured in the same way.

From Egypt the monastic system was transplanted at an early date to Palestine and Syria, and in the Antonian form. It struck on a congenial soil, and the characteristic features of the system, the eremitical life and severe bodily austerities, which in Egypt tended to become mitigated, here on the

contrary were yet further emphasised. The ingrained oriental craving for asceticism, to be seen among the Buddhist and Hindu ascetics of the present day, showed itself often in strange and even grotesque forms, of a kind hardly, if at all, found among Egyptian monks during the best period.

Though there were monks in the Greek-speaking parts of Asia Minor before St Basil, his is the name associated, and rightly, with the beginnings of Greek monasticism. After a year's travel wherein he visited the monks of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, he established, about 360, his monastery near Neo-Caesarea in Pontus. St Basil's construction of the monastic life was fully cenobitical, being an advance in this line on that of St Pachomius. We have seen that in the latter's monasteries the community was divided into houses, each with its own separate life, the necessary result, no doubt, of the large number of monks; while even in the houses there was great freedom in the matter of attendance at meals, and it was only for the principal celebrations that the whole community assembled in the public church. St Basil, on the other hand, established a common roof, a common table, common work, and common prayer daily; so that we meet here for the first time in Christian monastic legislation the fully realised idea of the cenobium and common life, properly so called. I have said elsewhere that 'St Benedict owed more of the ground-ideas of his Rule to St Basil than to any other monastic legislator';[1] therefore it will be well to bring out the chief features of his conception of monastic life. St Basil, then, declared against even the theoretical superiority of the eremitical life over the cenobitical. He laid down as a principle that monks should endeavour to do good to their fellow-men; and in order to bring works of charity within reach of his monks there were attached to the monasteries hospitals, or hospices, for the sick and the poor, wherein the monks ministered; also orphanages were established, separate from the monasteries but close at hand, and under the care of the monks. Boys, too, were taken into the monasteries to be educated, and that not necessarily with the view of their becoming monks. Another new feature in St Basil's conception of the monastic life was his discouragement of excessive asceticism; he enunciated the principle that

[1] *Encyc. Brit.* (ed. 11), art. 'Basilian Monks.'

work is of greater value than austerities, and drew the conclusion that fasting should not be practised to such an extent as to be detrimental to work. The time was divided between prayer, work, and the reading of Holy Scripture. They rose for the common psalmody while it was still night and chanted the divine praises till the dawn; six times each day did they assemble in the church for prayer. Their work was field labour and farming; St Gregory Nazianzen speaks of ploughing and vine-dressing, wood-drawing and stone-hewing, planting and draining. The food and clothing, too, the housing and all the conditions of life, he describes as being coarse and rough and austere.[1] From St Basil is derived the monasticism of eastern Europe. In the Holy Land during the fifth century, alongside of the cenobia, or monasteries proper, wherein the life was on the lines laid down by St Basil, there arose another kind of monastery, the 'laura,' wherein was led a semi-eremitical life, the monks living in separate huts within the enclosure. Hermits also abounded in Palestine.

Monasticism was first imported into western Europe direct from Egypt to Rome and Italy, and here again on the Antonian model. There is no reason for doubting the tradition that it first became known through the two Egyptian monks, both of Nitria, who accompanied St Athanasius to Rome in 339. Monasteries both of men and of women soon came into being in Rome and in other of the great cities of Italy; and an impetus was given to the movement, and its character and ideals were fixed, by the Latin translation of the Life of Anthony, made about 380.

Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli (*d.* 371), is worthy of special mention in view of the later history and developments of monasticism in the West. He was the first to combine the monastic and clerical states, making the clergy of his cathedral church live together in community under monastic rule. This union of the two lives was adopted by St Augustine in his monastery at Hippo, where as bishop he continued to live the common life with his cathedral clergy. In later ages it became the practice in all Western and most Eastern monachism

[1] See Newman, *Church of the Fathers*, 'Basil and Gregory.' An admirable monograph on St Basil's monastic legislation has recently appeared, W. K. Lowther Clarke's *St Basil the Great, a Study in Monasticism*, 1913; E. F. Morison's *St Basil and his Rule*, 1912, also is useful.

that choir monks should be in orders; but it was not general at so early a date as that which we are now considering: only in Africa had it any vogue; in the rest of western Europe the older type of lay monachism held the field for a long period.

Gaul was the country where the earliest European monasticism had its greatest expansion, and where its records are most abundant. St Martin of Tours appears to have been the inaugurator of Gallic monachism. He founded a monastery at Ligugé near Poitiers, *cir.* 360, and when he became Bishop of Tours he formed a monastery outside the city, at Marmoutier, the remains of which may still be visited, and made it his ordinary residence. The following account of the life there is culled from the pages of Sulpicius Severus, St Martin's friend and biographer. The monastery was situated two miles from the city, in a spot so secret and retired that Martin enjoyed in it the solitude of a hermit; his cell was a wooden hut; he had eighty disciples, most of whom dwelt in caves (still to be seen) hollowed out of the rocks in the overhanging cliff; they were clothed in coarse garments; they rarely left their cells except to assemble for prayer, or for the daily meal when the hour of fasting was over; no art was practised except that of transcribing, and this by the younger monks only, the elders giving themselves up wholly to prayer. The records of the monks of Condat in the Jura, and of those of Auvergne and central France, found in the pages of Gregory of Tours, display the characteristic features of Egyptian monachism of the Antonian type, the love of the eremitical life and of bodily austerities, emphasised and carried to a pitch hardly met with in Egypt, but common in Syria.[1] Monasticism in southern Gaul finds its chief literary expression in the writings of John Cassian, whose Institutes and Collations were composed for the guidance of the first abbots of Lerins, and of Cassian's own monastery at Marseilles. Recognising that mitigations in the practices of the Egyptian monks were necessitated by conditions of climate and racial temperament, Cassian adopts certain compromises; but he does so under protest, and he always makes it clear that he looks on the monks of Egypt, those especially of Scete, as the best exemplars of the monastic system, and the whole tend-

[1] See Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, ii, 79.

ency of the Conferences is to extol and to propagate the primitive Egyptian ideals.[1] The fame of Lerins, founded by Honoratus in 410, has eclipsed that of the other early monasteries of Gaul. The details have to be collected from many sources and pieced together to make a picture of the life. This has been done by Malnory in his standard work on St Caesarius of Arles. The monastery was a community like those of St Basil, devoted to the public psalmody and agricultural work ; but a number of the elder monks withdrew from the monastery to live as hermits in cells in the solitary places of the island. One feature was a new departure in the history of monasticism, the assiduous cultivation of theological studies, so that Lerins became famous as a school of theologians and controversialists, and also as a seminary of bishops drawn forth from it during the entire fifth century to rule the principal sees of southern and central Gaul.

Of early Spanish monachism before St Benedict nothing is known, and of Celtic but little that is sure. In Ireland and Wales there were great monasteries, each numbering many hundred monks. The eremitical life was much in vogue; and these Irish and Welsh hermits, notwithstanding all difficulties of climate, rivalled successfully in their fasts, austerities, and vigils their compeers of Egypt and even of Syria : of St David it is actually said that he imitated the Egyptian monks and led a life like theirs.[2] St Columbanus, the founder himself or by his disciples of the great Irish monasteries of central Europe, Luxeuil, St Gall, Bobbio, was born perhaps in the very year of St Benedict's death; he is mentioned here because his Rule and the Life of him and his companions, though composed on the Continent, undoubtedly reflect the spirit and tradition of cenobitic life in Ireland, and bear witness to its extreme rigour and to its similarity in conception to the Antonian monachism of Egypt.

[1] See especially *Coll.* xviii and xix, where the superiority of the solitary life is unequivocally proclaimed: going from the monastery to the eremitical life is as passing from a primary school to a secondary, 'de primis coenobii scolis ad secundum anachoreseos gradum tendere' (xviii *fin.*); the cenobium is a preparatory school, 'iuniorum scolae' (xix, 2).

[2] See the entire passage cited from the Life, H. Williams, *Christianity in Early Britain*, p. 327: this work contains a good account of Celtic monachism. See also the *Chrétientés Celtiques* of Dom Gougaud. There is a good summary in chap. iv of Workman's *Evolution of the Monastic Ideal.*

Italy, naturally, interests us more nearly than Ireland or Gaul; and for the ideals of Italian monasticism at the close of the fourth century St Jerome may be spokesman: 'Let us monks take as patterns which we are to follow the lives of Paul, of Anthony, of Julian, of Hilarion, and of the Macarii' (*Ep.* lviii), hermits all, and of an extreme austerity of life. The monastic institute in Italy in the fifth century was not so flourishing as that of Gaul. Monasteries, monks, hermits existed in all parts of the Peninsula; there is special mention of the hermits in the islands of the Tyrrhenian Sea. But there were no monasteries so famous as St Martin's at Tours, or Cassian's at Marseilles, or that of Honoratus in Lerins. Information concerning Italian monks during this period is meagre. Nevertheless certain indications are forthcoming. Rufinus made in Latin an abridgement of St Basil's Rules, in the hope that the 'Cappadocian observance' might make way in Italy; and St Jerome translated the Rule of Pachomius. There are indications that both Rules made their influence felt here and there, and in varying degrees, among Italian monasteries; but I do not know of any evidence that would lead us to suppose that the life of any monastery in Italy (or western Europe) was organised on the lines of either system: the Greek monasteries of southern Italy belong to a later date. Italian monachism in the fifth century seems to have been eclectic in character, and to have freely borrowed ideas and regulations from these two rules and from other documents of Egyptian inspiration, from Cassian, the Apophthegmata or Sayings of the Fathers of the Desert and their Lives; also a Rule of Macarius and other similar rules, all translated into Latin. St Benedict shows a familiarity with all these documents; and this goes far to prove that they were in current use in the monasteries of central Italy at the end of the fifth century. Thus, in spite of the fact that by this date monastic life in Italy had become indefinitely diversified, each monastery having practically its own rule according to the ideas of the abbot, it is seen that the authoritative documents were of Egyptian origin, and that Italian monachism still drew its inspiration from Egypt. This inference is verified by the few glimpses of the actual workings of the survivals of the pre-Benedictine monachism of central Italy which are afforded

by St Gregory's Dialogues. Alongside of fully cenobitical monasteries, one of which is said to have had 200 monks, there are many incidental mentions of monks leading an eremitical life and practising austerities of the kind we have met with in Gaul and in Syria. And of this fact, that the Antonian system of Egypt was still the ideal in Italy at the end of the fifth century, St Benedict himself is the palmary proof: for, on resolving to become a monk, he as a matter of course retired to the wilderness, and lived alone in a cave, in the practice of great austerities (St Gregory, Dialogues, ii, 1).[1]

The foregoing survey of pre-Benedictine monachism shows that over the whole of western Europe, in Italy, Gaul, and the Celtic lands alike, although in practice monasticism tended to become more and more cenobitical, the theory still was that of the Antonian monachism of Egypt; the dominant feeling was that the more nearly the life could be made to approximate to that of the Egyptian hermits the more perfectly was the monastic ideal being carried out; and the great object of European monks was to emulate those of Egypt. It may be well to confirm these impressions, which are the fruit of a prolonged study of the literature of early Christian monachism, by the words of another worker in the field of early monachism in Gaul and Italy. Mr Dudden, speaking specially of Gaul, says: 'The monasticism which had been imported into Gaul from the East had not yet become adapted to the conditions of Western life. It was not yet acclimatised, and had not learned how to accommodate itself to its new environment. The austerities of Eastern monachism, though mitigated in some cases, were imitated as closely as circumstances would permit, and the asceticism of the saints of the Thebaid (i.e. Antonian) was the goal of the strivings of Western devotees.'[2]

In Ireland this system worked successfully for a long time. But in Gaul great difficulties were experienced. Even Cassian thought it necessary to make mitigations, grudgingly, in the Egyptian manner of life. And in the Dialogues of Sulpicius Severus one of the interlocutors is Gallus, a Gallic monk, a disciple of St Martin, who makes several half-comical

[1] With the foregoing sketch may be compared Workman's *Evolution of the Monastic Ideal*, ii, and Pourrat's *Spiritualité Chrétienne*, vi.

[2] *Gregory the Great*, ii, 78.

protests that such fasting as is possible in the East cannot be expected of Gauls: 'The love of eating is gluttony in the case of the Greeks, whereas among the Gauls it is due to their nature.' Mr Dudden does not hesitate to characterise Gallic monachism as decadent. There can be no doubt that in Italy, too, the same difficulties came to be felt, and that in the course of the fifth century considerable and widespread laxity had made its way into the monastic system. It is evident that St Benedict's descriptions of the Sarabitae and Gyrovagi are no mere antiquarian reproductions of what St Jerome and Cassian had said before, but depict a state of things that existed around him. We have, moreover, the instance of the relaxed monastery that he was called to govern before founding any monastery of his own. The picture of Italian monastic life in the sixth century revealed in St Gregory's letters gives an impression of much disorganisation and many abuses;[1] but in all such letters, written for the purpose of correction, the abuses must needs loom unduly large. This falling away may be ascribed largely to the fact that the monks of Italy and Gaul were endeavouring to emulate a life hard enough in oriental lands, but doubly hard in western Europe; and were trying to live up to an ideal which the climatic and other conditions of the country rendered impossible, or at any rate extremely difficult. The downward process would inevitably be hastened by the discouragement and demoralisation consequent on an abiding sense of failure. As Mr Dudden puts it: 'Though a few monks and anchorets lived up to the Eastern standard of asceticism, the majority of religious found the ideal too high for them, and, in despair of attaining to it, became careless and lax.'[2]

Such was the prevailing condition of monasticism in western Europe at the opening of the sixth century, and such were the dangers threatening it, when St Benedict founded his institute and wrote his Rule.

[1] Dudden, *op. cit.* ii, 174. [2] *Op. cit.* ii, 79.

# CHAPTER III

## ST BENEDICT'S IDEA

IN another connexion I have written as follows: 'How far have Benedictine history and work in the world, and, it may be said, Benedictine ideas, gone beyond anything that can have been in St Benedict's mind. How little he thought that his monks were to be apostles, missionaries, civilisers, school-masters, editors of the Fathers. How surprised would he have been at the figure of a medieval mitred abbot, a feudal baron, fulfilling the functions of a great landlord and of a statesman. How bewildering to him would have been the gorgeous church functions and the stately ceremonial that have become one of the most cherished traditions among his sons. How meaningless would the work that has come to be regarded as characteristically Benedictine have seemed in his eyes, and how strange would the adjective "learned," associated as a sort of *constans epitheton* with his name, have sounded in his ears, who (to use St Gregory's quaint phrase) fled from the Roman schools "scienter nescius et sapienter indoctus." What a development, what a transformation is here! Yet, for all that, it is by common consent recognised that, on the whole and in its great currents, Benedictine history has been true to the idea of the Founder, a legitimate development, not a perversion.'[1]

In this passage is applied to Benedictine monachism the principle accepted in regard to all institutions, social, political, religious, that live on and work during long periods of time, that they must needs change and develop and grow, it may be almost out of recognition. It is a sign of life; for to live is to grow and to change, and such changes, however seemingly great, which are but as the vital responses of a living

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, 1906, p. 490.

organism to the conditions and needs of its successive environments, are justified as legitimate and true developments of the original idea. Hence to isolate St Benedict's idea, or St Francis' idea, and make it the sole measure of Benedictine or Franciscan history, ruling out whatever was not explicitly present to the Founder's consciousness, would be unhistorical, uncritical, and untrue.

And so, if we now endeavour to bring out into the clear St Benedict's own idea, his reconstruction of monasticism as it shaped itself in his mind, it is not at all with the object of showing that whatever is outside his concept is thereby false to his idea, or that the most literal reproduction of the physical conditions of life in his monastery would be the most faithful presentation of his mind and spirit throughout all ages. Quite otherwise. But, on the other hand, it is true that fidelity to the original type and continuity of principles are the chief tests of the truth of historical developments.[1] And so an examination and appreciation of St Benedict's idea in its simplicity and as it was in his own mind is the necessary prelude to any study of Benedictine monachism, the norm by which must be judged all manifestations of Benedictine life and activities at all times. We have, therefore, at the outset to try to arrive at a correct conception of what St Benedict's idea was.

(1) It is fortunate that he tells us himself quite definitely what he intends to do: 'We are going to establish a School of God's Service, in which we hope we shall establish nothing harsh, nothing burthensome' (Prologue).[2] St Benedict, we have seen, when he first made up his mind to be a monk, acting according to the Egyptian monastic ideals current in western Europe, retired to a desert spot and dwelt in a cave, enduring hunger and thirst, heat and cold, and all the inclemency of the weather. But when he came to write his

[1] They are Newman's first two 'Notes of a Genuine Development of an Idea,' in the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. The other Notes are: Power of Assimilation, Logical Sequence, Anticipation of its Future, Conservative Action on its Past, Chronic Vigour.

[2] 'Constituenda est ergo nobis dominici schola servitii. In qua institutione nihil asperum, nihil grave nos constituturos speramus' (*Regula*, Prol. 116; the lines added in references to the Rule are those of my 'Editio critica-practica,' Herder, 1912).

Rule and to legislate for the life of his own monastery of Monte Cassino and any others that might adopt his Rule, his ideas had undergone a change, embodied in those words in which he says that in the school of divine service he was founding, he intended to establish 'nothing harsh or burthensome.' These words have very commonly been interpreted as a pious exaggeration or device to encourage his disciples, and as not really meaning what they say; but it is easy to show that they do mean exactly what they say. They are borne out by other passages of the Rule. The forty-ninth chapter opens: 'Though we read that a monk's life should at all times have the Lenten observance, yet as few have this courage, we urge them in these days of Lent to wash away the negligences of other times.' Similarly in the fortieth chapter: 'Though we read that wine is not for monks at all, yet as in our days monks cannot be persuaded of this, at any rate let us agree to use it sparingly.' And there are other cases in which what may be called the appeal to monastic tradition in regard to austerity of life is made, only to be set aside, that mitigations may be deliberately adopted.[1] This point will be worked out in some detail in the next chapter; here it will suffice to quote St Benedict's words when summing up in the last chapter of the Rule: 'We have written this Rule in order that by observing it in monasteries we may show we have in some measure at any rate integrity of morals and a beginning of the monastic life.'[2] And in concluding he calls his Rule 'a very little rule for beginners' (minima inchoationis regula).

In this St Benedict is not using the language of feigned humility, but is speaking the very truth, as appears from a comparison of his Rule with the records of the monachism of Egypt or of western Europe in his day. However austere may seem in the twentieth century a life according to the letter of St Benedict's Rule, in his own day it can have appeared but as an easy form of monastic life, when compared either with the existing monastic rules and accepted traditions on the one hand, or with the ordinary discipline of the Church

[1] See cc. XVIII *fin.*, XLVIII, 16-22.

[2] 'Regulam hanc descripsimus, ut hanc observantes in monasteriis aliquatenus vel honestatem morum aut initium conversationis nos demonstremus habere' (*Reg.* LXXIII).

for the faithful, as in the matter of fasting and penitential code, on the other. Indeed, Dom Morin declares that in these matters St Benedict's régime was no more than was often imposed on Christians living in the world.[1] Thus in his reconstruction of the monastic life St Benedict's idea was to establish a manner of life, self-denying, of course, and hard; but not a life of great austerity. Benedictine life is not, and is not intended to be, what is called a 'penitential life'; and any one who feels called to such a life should go to some other order and not become a Benedictine, for a life such as this is not in accordance with St Benedict's idea.

(2) Another of St Benedict's fundamental ideas appears in the first chapter of the Rule. He lays it down that he writes his Rule for cenobites (i.e. monks living in community), and for cenobites only. After speaking of other kinds of monks, both good and bad, he says in conclusion: 'Let us proceed to legislate for the strongest and best kind, the cenobites.'[2] He has just given a definition of cenobites; but as this chapter is in large measure based on passages of St Jerome and Cassian (see my edition of the *Regula*, p. 9), it will be helpful to know precisely their idea of cenobites, which St Benedict had before his eyes when framing his own definition. St Jerome only says that cenobites may be called 'men living in common' (in commune viventes), or 'dwelling in common' (qui in commune habitant) (*Ep.* xxii, 34, 35). Cassian's description is: 'Who live together in a congregation and are governed by the judgement of a single elder.'[3] St Benedict explains cenobites as 'monasterial, serving as Christ's soldiers under a rule or abbot.'[4]

[1] *L'Idéal Monastique*, iii.

[2] 'His ergo omissis (*scil.* heremitis, sarabaitis, gyrovagis) ad coenobitarum fortissimum genus disponendum veniamus' (*Reg.* 1). 'Fortissimum genus' is difficult to translate. Evidently it does not mean 'most austere,' or 'most strenuous.' It has been translated 'most steadfast,' or 'most valiant,' or even 'best.' This latter is what it really means. On the whole the rendering given above, 'strongest and best,' seems to bring out the meaning.

[3] 'In congregatione pariter consistentes unius senioris iudicio gubernantur' (*Coll.* xviii, 4).

[4] 'Monasteriale, militans sub regula vel abbate' (*Reg.* 1). 'Vel' with St Benedict often is equivalent to 'et' (see my ed. of the *Regula*, p. 197). There were many monasteries without any rule other than the living voice of the abbot, but there were not any with a rule and no abbot, or other superior. At the present day the 'idiorhythmic' monasteries of the Eastern Church are governed by a board of seniors without any personal superior.

He uses the word 'monasterial,' not monastic, as the latter would be applicable to hermits as well as cenobites.[1] 'Monasterial' receives its interpretation in various places in the Rule; 'dwelling in cenobia' (c. V), 'persevering in the monastery till death' (Prol. 128); and, as a matter of fact, the whole tenor of the Rule contemplates nothing else than an organised community living a fully common life under rule; common prayer, common work, common meals, common dormitory; a life lived wholly within the precincts of the monastery, the occasions of going forth being reduced to a minimum, and regarded as definitely undesirable and dangerous (c. IV *fin.*, c. LXVI *fin.*).

St Benedict speaks, indeed, with admiration of the eremitical life (c. I), which then formed an integral part of European monachism, and was commonly regarded not only as the most perfect realisation of the monastic life, but as the goal to be aimed at in practice by those who had the necessary courage and strength in virtue; but he expressly declares that he legislates for cenobites alone. Consequently, when we find instances of eastern or western monks, especially Irish, going forth from their monasteries to lead the eremitical life; or when we see them undertaking pilgrimages or wanderings as a practice of asceticism, as is common now among Buddhist ascetics, such things have great interest for the general history of monasticism: but they have no interest for Benedictine history, and afford no help for the interpretation of St Benedict's idea, which was plainly and only cenobitic. There are other kinds of monks, good and bad; but St Benedict's idea of his own monks was that they were to be cenobites, spending their lives in the monastery, under the conditions of community life.

(3) But St Benedict introduced a modification into the idea of cenobitical life. Up to his time monks, though looked upon as bound, whether by vows or without them, irrevocably to the practice of the monastic life, so that to abandon it was considered an apostasy, still were not tied to a particular monastery or community, but were allowed with little difficulty to pass from one house to another. St Benedict's most special and tangible contribution to the development of

[1] 'Monasticus' is from monachus; 'monasterialis' from monasterium. The word is found elsewhere, but it is not common.

monasticism was the introduction of the vow of stability. It will be necessary later on to inquire with some care what was his own full idea of stability. Here it will be enough to say in general that by it he put a stop to such liberty of passage from monastery to monastery, and incorporated the monk by his profession in the community of his own monastery. St Benedict thus bound the monks of a monastery together into a permanent family, united by bonds that lasted for life. This idea that the monks of each Benedictine monastery form a permanent community, distinct from that of every other Benedictine monastery, is among the most characteristic features of Benedictine monachism, and a chief discriminant between it and the later orders. This idea of the 'monastic family,' at any rate in its concrete realisation, was St Benedict's. The great Coptic monasteries of Pachomius and Schenute were far too big to be families; they were rather great agricultural colonies, divided into houses, and organised on the basis of the different trades carried on in them. Concerning the inner life of St Basil's monasteries we have not sufficient information; but neither St Martin's at Tours, where the eighty monks abode in separate caves, nor the huge Celtic monasteries with their hundreds of monks, can be regarded as embodying the family type so characteristic of Benedictine monachism: nor could they, without the idea enshrined in the Benedictine vow of stability.

(4) In view of current notions concerning religious orders, it is necessary here at the outset to bring out a negative side of St Benedict's idea, and emphasise the fact that he had no thought of instituting an 'order.' There was no such thing in his time as monastic or other orders. St Benedict had no intention that the monasteries wherein his Rule was followed should form a group apart; nor did they for many centuries, but each Benedictine monastery was a separate entity, autonomous and self-contained, having no organic bond with other monasteries. Among the houses of the Black Monks, pure and simple (that is, outside of the systems of Cluny and Citeaux), each abbey continued to stand in its primitive isolation, until the formation of national chapters at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Moreover, associated with the modern concept of a re-

ligious order is the idea of some special work to be done, some need of the Church to be met; and a man joins the order hoping thereby to be enabled the better to carry out this work to which he feels called. But with the Benedictines it was not so: there was no special form of work which their organisation was designed to undertake. A man became a monk precisely because he felt called to be a monk and for no other purpose or object whatever, nor as a preparation for anything else—except Heaven. The monk's object is to sanctify his soul and serve God by leading a life in community in accordance with the Gospel counsels. Works of various kinds will be given him to do; but these are secondary, and no one of them is part of his essential vocation as a monk. What has been here said may be illustrated and enforced from the earlier pages of Cardinal Gasquet's *Sketch of Monastic History*.[1] The monastic life 'is nothing more than the Christian life of the Gospel counsels conceived in its full simplicity and perfection. It has no determinate object in view beyond this; it has no special systems or methods. The broad law of Christian liberty is its only guide; it is neither strict nor lax; it aims neither at too high things nor is it content with any low standard of conduct; but it adapts itself to the workings of grace in each individual soul, and gains its end when it has brought that individual soul to the highest perfection of which its natural and supernatural gifts render it capable' (p. xiv). Again: 'It is merely a systematised form of a life according to the Gospel counsels, existing for its own sake, as a full expression of the Church's true and perfect life' (p. xi).

(5) Returning to St Benedict's definition of his monastery as 'a school of the service of God,' we ask what was the kind of service that he established? It may be said to be contained in the three services: Self-discipline, Prayer, Work. Of these three services, self-discipline is, of course, the subjective basis and condition of the others, that which gives its meaning to the whole life; it will be enlarged upon in the two succeeding chapters.

Of the external services St Benedict placed prayer, and in particular common prayer, the celebration in choir of the

[1] Prefixed to reprint of translation of Montalembert's *Monks of the West*, 1895, vol. i.

canonical office, first in order of thought and importance. He calls it 'the duty' or 'the task of our service' (servitutis officium, *vel* pensum, c. XVI, 5; c. L, 8); it so filled his mind that it is the one subject on which he legislates in minute detail, devoting eleven chapters to that ordering of the psalmody and office which after fourteen centuries is still used by his sons: 'the Work of God' is his name for it, and he says that 'nothing is to be set before the Work of God' (nihil operi Dei praeponatur) (c. XLIII). That by 'Work of God' (opus Dei, opus divinum) St Benedict means precisely the public recital of the office, and nothing else, is made clear by an examination of the places where the term occurs in the Rule.[1]

The prominence of the opus Dei in St Benedict's mind has been erected into a principle, that the public celebration of the office is the purpose of his institute, and that Benedictines exist for the sake of the choir, 'propter chorum fundati.' I have heard of a Benedictine abbot who expressed this idea so crudely as to say to his monks: 'You have the choir and the refectory; what more do you need?' But the view finds expression also in Abbot Delatte's excellent Commentary on the Rule, which I read in general with great agreement: 'The proper and distinctive work of the Benedictine, his portion, his mission, is the liturgy. He makes his profession in order to be one in the Church—the society of divine praise—who glorifies God according to the forms instituted by herself.'[2] This means that the essence of a Benedictine vocation is the celebration of the Liturgy. If that be the case, it is due to St Benedict himself, and must be counted among the innovations he made in the monastic life, for it was not part of the inheritance he received from the earlier monasticism. The public celebration of the canonical office always held a prominent place in cenobitical life of whatever kind; but the idea that it was the essence of the life does not emerge from the

[1] See my edition, Index, pp. 191 and 203. 'Opus Dei' was used in the same sense at Lerins, as appears in the *Lerins Psalmody* and in the Rules of Caesarius; but in other literature of early monasticism it has a wider meaning and signifies the works of the spiritual and ascetical life (*loc. cit.*).

[2] 'L'oeuvre propre et distinctive du Bénédictin, son lot, sa mission, c'est la liturgie. Il émet profession pour être, dans l'Église, société de louange divine, celui qui glorifie Dieu selon les formes instituées par elle' (p. 153).

records of the Egyptian monks, nor from the writings of St Basil or Cassian. So far as the earlier monachism goes, a much stronger case could be made out for Fr Augustine Baker's contention that private spiritual prayer is the scope of the monastic state.

The 'nihil operi Dei praeponatur,' when taken in its context and in relation to the passage in the Rule of Macarius on which it is based (see my ed. of the *Regula*, p. 77), does not afford ground for thinking St Benedict narrowed the conception of the monastic life in this way. Is it to be supposed that his idea was: I want to secure the celebration of the divine office, and therefore will I establish a monastery. This no doubt has been true of many a founder of individual monasteries, collegiate chapters and chantries in the middle ages; but can hardly be true of St Benedict. Was not his idea rather: I want to establish a monastery to be a school of God's service, wherein the primary community service shall be the public celebration of the divine office. Consequently I agree with Dom Morin in holding that the 'propter chorum fundati' is an exaggeration.[1] I believe the idea arose at a later date, in the ninth or tenth century, at a time when manual labour had dropped out of the life of the monasteries, and there was a prodigious increase in the church services, masses, offices, additional devotions, so that the monks spent most of their time in church, as will be explained in a later chapter. It was then too that the liturgical pomp and circumstance and the elaboration of ritual underwent a great development; whereas St Benedict's liturgy was doubtless of a severe simplicity that would nowadays appear puritan.

But whatever view be held on this point of Benedictine theory, all will accept what Cardinal Gasquet has written on the actual place the office holds in Benedictine life: 'The central figure of the society (of the monastery) was its divine King. The monastery was a palace, a court, and the divine office was the daily service and formal homage rendered to the divine Majesty. This, the opus Dei, was the crown of the whole structure of the monastic edifice. It was pre-eminently the work of the monk which was to take precedence of every other employment, and to which monastic tradition has ever

[1] *L'Idéal Monastique*, vii.

given a marked solemnity. Day by day, and almost hour by hour, the monk, purified by his vows, enclosed from the world, seeks to renew the wonderful familiarity with his God and Father which our first parents forfeited, but which, through our second Adam, is restored in the Christian Church. In a word, the divine office is the soul of the monastic life' (*Sketch*, xiii). The Declarations of the English Congregation say that 'our primary duty is to carry out on earth what the angels do in heaven,'[1] and to this probably no exception will be taken.

(6) Of the service of Work it will here suffice to say that the work fell under the categories of manual labour and reading, between which were apportioned the hours of the day not spent in the church. The labour was predominantly work in the fields and garden, or the housework in kitchen and elsewhere, necessary for the life of a large community. The reading, it may safely be said, was confined to the Scriptures and the Fathers, and was devotional rather than intellectual in character and scope: 'lectio divina' is St Benedict's way of describing it (c. XLVIII, 3).

A simple life it was, made up of a round of simple duties; and the monks were quite simple men: though no doubt some were of the same station in life as St Benedict himself, the great majority of them were recruited from the Italian peasantry, or from the semi-barbarous Gothic invaders (*Dialogues*, ii, 6). They were not priests, they were not clerics; there were only two or three priests, perhaps only one, in the community, just sufficient to celebrate the Sunday mass and administer the sacraments. The general conditions of life were probably not rougher or harder than would have been the lot of most of them had they remained in the world. The difference lay in the element of religion brought into every detail of their lives. And so they lived together their common life, serving God by the daily round of duties in choir, in farm and garden, in kitchen and bakehouse and workshop—chanting, praying, working, reading, meditating—their life-work and their life-interests being concentrated as far as possible within the precincts of the monastery or its immediate vicinity.

Such were the primitive Benedictines, St Benedict's own

[1] 'Primarium officium nostrum est in terra praestare quod angeli in caelo.'

monks, such was the mustard seed which has grown into the great and varied and complex tree that will be revealed to us when we come to study St Benedict's institute as it has developed itself in history. Such was St Benedict's own idea of the monasticism which in the maturity of his religious experience and spiritual wisdom he established at Monte Cassino and legislated for in his Rule. And this was the community, and these the men, destined by God to play so great a part in repairing the ruin, religious, social, material, in which Europe was lying, and in converting, christianising, and educating the new nations that were to make the new great Christian Commonwealth.

From what has been said the pertinent observation follows, that to set up, as has been done, St Benedict in his cave at Subiaco as the embodiment of the truest Benedictine ideal, and the pattern which it would be well for Benedictines, had they the courage and firmness of mind, to try to imitate, is unhistorical and untrue: no less untrue than it would be to set up St Ignatius at Manresa as the best embodiment of the spirit and life of the Society he founded. Such episodes in the lives of these and other great founders were only periods of formation and preparation for their work of religious creation; and when they came forth from their retirement they did not shape their institutes on the lines they had themselves at first adopted, but in conformity with the lessons they had learned therein in many things they turned their back upon their own early experiences; so that their fully formed and matured idea is to be seen in their rules and in their institutes in the final form in which they left them.

It is impossible to include under any single formula St Benedict's idea, or the Essence of Benedictinism; just as impossible as it is to include under any single formula the Essence of Christianity. All that can be done is to state various aspects which taken together may afford an adequate conception. The following description gathers up the points that have been brought out in this chapter. St Benedict's idea was to form a community of monks bound to live together until death, under rule, in common life, in the monastery of their profession, as a religious family, leading a life not of marked austerity but devoted to the service of God—'the holy service they have

professed,' he calls it ;[1] the service consisting in the community act of the celebration of the divine office, and in the discipline of a life of ordered daily manual work and religious reading, according to the Rule and under obedience to the abbot.

It will be of interest in conclusion to confront this account of original Benedictine life with Newman's impressions of it as given in his essay on 'The Mission of St Benedict.' Benedictines have reason to be grateful that one of Newman's knowledge and insight and historical genius should have given them this objective study of their life and spirit. The monks of those days, he writes, 'had a unity of object, of state, and of occupation. Their object was rest and peace; their state was retirement; their occupation was some work that was simple, as opposed to intellectual, viz. prayer, fasting, meditation, study, transcription, manual labour, and other unexciting, soothing employments. . . . The monastic institute, says the biographer of St Maurus, demands *Summa Quies*, the most perfect quietness; and where was quietness to be found, if not in reverting to the original condition of man, as far as the changed circumstances of our race admitted; in having no wants, of which the supply was not close at hand; in the "nil admirari"; in having neither hope nor fear of anything below; in daily prayer, daily bread, and daily work, one day being just like another, except that it was one step nearer than the day before it to that great Day which would swallow up all days, the day of everlasting rest.'[2]

[1] 'Servitium sanctum quod professi sunt' (c. v, 4).

[2] *Mission of St Benedict*, § 3 (p. 29 in separate reprint).

# CHAPTER IV

## BENEDICTINE ASCETICISM

FIVE chapters will now be devoted to the 'Inner Life,' or the personal dealings of the individual soul with God, and will study St Benedict's mind, as it may be read in the Rule and in Benedictine tradition, on the range of subjects embraced under the ideas of Self-discipline and Prayer. Self-discipline has already been put in the first place, as the most fundamental, among the services of that School of God's Service that St Benedict declared his monasticism to be; and it will be taken in this and the following chapter under the titles 'Asceticism' and 'Spiritual Life.' Rightly understood, these are indeed but different names for the same thing; still, it will be convenient to treat them separately. And first, Benedictine Asceticism.

Elsewhere I have said: 'Monasticism is a system of living which owes its origin to those tendencies of the human soul which are summed up in the terms "asceticism" and "mysticism." Mysticism may broadly be described as the effort to give effect to the craving for a union of the soul with the Deity already in this life; and asceticism as the effort to give effect to the hankering after an ever-progressive purification of the soul and an atoning for sin by renunciation and self-denial in things lawful. These two tendencies may well be said to be general instincts of humanity; because, though not always called into activity, they are always liable to be evoked, and in all ages and among all races they frequently have asserted themselves. Indeed the history of religion shows that they are among the most deep-rooted and widespread instincts of the human soul; and monasticism is the attempt to develop and regulate their exercise.'[1]

[1] Art. 'Monasticism,' *Encyc. Brit.* (ed. 11).

It is necessary briefly to set forth the real nature of asceticism and its place in Christian life; because without a proper notion of the theory of asceticism it would not be possible to understand Benedictine monachism, or any monachism whatsoever. Asceticism (ἄσκησις, from ἀσκεῖν, exercise or training, as of athletes) denotes strictly ethical training, self-discipline, in the widest sense of the term. So understood asceticism must be an ingredient in every seriously lived Christian life, and in any well-ordered moral life. But the name is hardly used of the ordinary endeavours of a good life; it connotes some special kind of endeavour, some set efforts at self-denial and spiritual achievement beyond what is required in order to work out our salvation. It is a subject on which much has been written of late, and thoughtful non-Catholic opinion has travelled far from the crude old Protestant view that asceticism is unchristian and unnatural. To mention only English works, the subject is well dealt with in chapters i to iii, and in App. i and iii, of Hannay's *Spirit and Origin of Christian Monasticism*, and more briefly in the first chapter of Lowther Clarke's *St Basil;* and a hundred columns are devoted to it in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, where it is treated in full, in a dozen sections by as many writers.

It will be helpful to give various definitions or descriptions of asceticism from these writers, especially as they regard it from more or less critical standpoints. In the section 'Christian Asceticism' of Hastings' *Encyclopaedia*, by the well-known Protestant scholar, Dr Otto Zöckler, author of an exhaustive monograph, *Askese und Mönchtum*, the following account is given: 'The word, when used in the sphere of religion and ethics, denotes self-preparation for a virtuous course of conduct, the zealous practice of acts of devotion and morality; this practice of virtue in the narrower and stricter sense, or what may be called moral gymnastic, may consist in exercises of an inward kind (prayer offered in the heart, examination of conscience and the like), or in acts of self-discipline passing over into the outward life (self-mortifications by fasting, voluntary poverty, sexual continence, etc.).' Mr Lowther Clarke writes: 'Asceticism is severe self-discipline undertaken for religious ends, and exercised with

reference both to the natural desires of the body and the distractions of the outer world' (*St Basil*, p. 3).

Mortification is a term closely akin to asceticism, and perhaps rather signifies the acts whereby the idea of asceticism is carried out in practice. The word goes back to St Paul. In the Latin Bible 'mortificare' represents *νεκροῦν*.[1] The idea in ascetical language is the killing of the self in all its evil manifestations—self-love, self-conceit, self-will, self-seeking, and every form of selfishness. Like asceticism, it is internal or external; the external or bodily mortification being of value only in so far as it promotes the internal or spiritual. The well-known English Benedictine ascetic and mystic author, Fr Augustine Baker, who will many times be referred to in the sequel, divides the whole range of the spiritual life into the two branches, Mortification and Prayer, these being only more concrete names for the abstract terms asceticism and mysticism as used above. Fr Baker's treatment of mortification is in large measure a treatise on the chief religious virtues, including chapters on Patience, Humility, and the Love of God. The latter would not in ordinary language be considered a mortification: but Fr Baker's meaning is that love of God is the mortification of self-love. His conception of mortification is that by it 'we exercise all duties and practise all virtues which regard ourselves' . . . thus, 'in general, mortification includes the exercise of all virtues; for in every act of virtue we mortify some inordinate passion and inclination of nature, so that to attain to perfect mortification is to be possessed of all virtues.'[2] Further, he says that 'prayer is in itself the most excellent and effectual mortification, for in it and by it the most secret risings of inordinate passions are contradicted.'[3] Such teaching carries the idea of interior or spiritual mortification to its extreme limit.

It is under the leading idea of Renunciation that Mr Hannay considers asceticism, and also Mr Workman, for whom monasticism is but a chapter 'in the long story of renunciation in the Christian Church';[4] and in this they have Cassian with them, whose favourite name for monk is

[1] 'Mortificate membra vestra quae sunt super terram' (Col. iii, 5).
[2] *Sancta Sophia*, pp. 196, 209. [3] *Ibid.* p. 198.
[4] *Evolution of Monastic Ideal*, p. 5.

Renunciant. Hannay writes: 'Asceticism is the refusal to make any compromise with the ways of the world, even with ways which are without taint of actual sin'; and such asceticisms as 'poverty, communism, virginity, and fasting, are each of them a great renunciation of the world and its ways' (*op. cit.* p. 31). And so the three great renunciations consecrated in the three vows of Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity have at all times been looked on as the classic asceticisms. The idea of renunciation of the world was the most general conception of the monastic life, 'withdrawal,' *ἀναχώρησις*, being the earliest technical term for becoming a monk. It was a relinquishing of home and family, a renouncing of the businesses and ambitions and pleasures of life, even the lawful ones; it implied solitude and silence, either absolute, as with hermits, or mitigated, as with cenobites; and it involved in varying degrees a number of lesser renunciations, as of intoxicants, or creature comforts, or intellectual pursuits, largely at the choice of the individual.

The foregoing writers, even so uncompromising a Protestant as Dr Zöckler, recognise that renunciation and asceticism so understood are found in the New Testament. They have place in our Lord's life—a life of virginity, with one recorded severe fast, and poverty, at all times real and sometimes extreme, which those who accept the Christian tradition must believe to have been voluntarily chosen. The Sermon on the Mount is highly ascetical, and so are many phases of St Paul's teaching. Asceticism soon found expression in the early Church, and was a recognised and well-established feature in Christian life before the monastic movement of the fourth century. All this is in accord with the trend of recent thought.

But for all that, Canon Hannay is probably right in saying that a bed-rock difference between Protestantism and Catholicism still lies precisely in this matter of asceticism and in the outlook on life. For Protestantism the ideal of the highest Christian life is a well-ordered and religious use of the good things of life. It has little or no sympathy with renunciations or even purely spiritual asceticisms, except in so far as they are necessary to secure this object; and for most of Fr Baker's interior mortifications it would have scant approval. Protestantism denies the theory of Counsels of Perfection as

distinguished from Precepts of the Christian code; and on the validity of this distinction, as Canon Hannay says, the theoretical justification of monasticism rests. As the matter cannot be discussed in this place I am content to refer to his striking appendix on 'Counsels and Precepts,' wherein he deals with it in view of the most modern Protestant position, that of Rothe, which leads, he declares, to conclusions against which 'heart and conscience alike cry out.'

This must suffice on the general question of asceticism. From what has been said it appears that asceticism falls under three branches:

(1) There is purely internal self-discipline and spiritual exercising, carried out in mind and heart and soul, without becoming in any way external;

(2) There are the great renunciations, especially those of the three 'Evangelical Counsels,'—Poverty, Obedience, Chastity,—which have at all times been recognised as the principal external asceticisms;

(3) There are the various forms of corporal austerities or bodily mortifications.

The first will be dealt with in the next chapter, on the 'Spiritual Life.'

In regard to the second, it is enough to say that the renunciations of the three Counsels which are of the essence of the monastic state in all its forms were adopted by St Benedict without compromise: obedience is the explicit object of one of the Benedictine vows; and if poverty and chastity are not, personal poverty and renunciation of private ownership is explicitly exacted, and in very complete fashion, by the Rule. As for chastity, it is taken for granted as a condition of the life; 'to love chastity' is one of St Benedict's 'Instruments of Good Works'; and it cannot be doubted that the expression 'the monk has no power over his own body' (proprii corporis potestas, c. LVIII, 62) is used as in 1 Cor. vii, 4, and means that once professed the monk is bound to the observance of chastity.

It is the third branch of asceticisms, that of corporal austerity, that is to be dealt with here; and it is taken first because there is a common tendency to identify asceticism, wrongly, with this one form, and to understand by the term

self-inflicted, or at least deliberately chosen and sought, bodily austerities and discomforts. In deference to this current acceptation of the word, it is well to begin the study of Benedictine asceticism by examining St Benedict's mind in regard to this kind of mortifications.

And in the first place it has to be noted that of what may be called artificial self-inflicted penances—the hair-shirts, chainlets, spikes, and pricks, and the scourgings, that play so large a part in the history of asceticism, and have been so conspicuous in later medieval and modern devotional life—there is no trace whatsoever in St Benedict's Rule, or in his life as told by St Gregory. It is true that if exhortations and warnings failed, corporal chastisement, flogging, was resorted to in the case of refractory monks; but it was a punishment, not a mortification, and it was not self-inflicted. The practice of self-flagellation, called 'taking the discipline,' did not come into vogue (at any rate in the West) until long after St Benedict's time, its introduction being associated with the name of St Peter Damian in the eleventh century. Oriental monks, especially in Syria, commonly practised artificial penances often outlandish in character;[1] and European monks in Gaul were imitating them, as we learn from Gregory of Tours, binding heavy weights on their backs and carrying chains.[2] All this is quite foreign to St Benedict's spirit; for St Gregory tells us that when a neighbouring hermit chained himself to a rock, as Simeon Stylites had done before ascending his pillar, St Benedict rebuked him, saying: 'If thou be God's servant, let the chain of Christ, not any iron chain, hold thee' (Dialogues, iii, 16).

Now we come to the other kind of bodily austerities, those that may be called natural and that formed the staple of the mortifications of the great Egyptian hermits, the privations of food and drink, of sleep and clothing, exposure to heat and cold, labours undertaken in order to wear down the body. Before St Benedict the practice of these bodily austerities had been looked on as a chief means for attaining the spiritual end of the monastic life. But he prescribed for his monks sufficient food, ample sleep, proper clothing. A number of

[1] *Lausiac History of Palladius*, i, 240.
[2] *Ibid.* 247; also Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, ii, 79.

antitheses between his regulations and those of the previously fashionable Egyptian monachism will bring into clear light the changes he made and the spirit underlying them.[1]

In the matter of food, he allows to each daily a pound of bread, and orders two dishes of cooked food, and a third of fruit or young vegetables, 'so that he who cannot eat of one may make his meal of the other' (c. XXXIX). As Abbot Delatte says, this menu would have appeared to the Fathers of the Desert as intended for monks utterly relaxed.[2] He allows also a measure (hemina, half a pint at least, very likely more) of wine daily. The advice and practice of the Egyptian monks was to reduce the quantity of food and drink almost to a minimum: St Benedict prescribes only frugality and the avoidance of gluttony and surfeiting (cc. XXXIX, XL).

In Egypt there was a constant striving to reduce the amount of sleep to the narrowest possible limit, and such battling with sleep and drowsiness was one of the favourite asceticisms. St Benedict allows his monks during the greater part of the year more than eight hours of unbroken sleep each night; and in the summer five or six hours by night and a siesta by day (see chapter XII).

In Egypt the monk slept on the bare ground with stones for pillows, or, at best, on papyrus mats; and whereas Abbot John in Cassian deplores the degeneracy of the times in that a blanket may be found in hermits' cells—'a thing I cannot mention without shame'—St Benedict allows not only a blanket, but mattress, coverlet, and pillow as well (c. LV).

Abbot Pambo of Nitria laid it down that a monk's clothes should be such that if they were left out on the road no one would think of taking them. St Benedict directs that the monks are to get new clothes while the old ones are still fit to be given to the poor; the abbot is to see that the monks' clothes fit them; they are to have warmer clothes in winter, lighter in summer; the clothes are to be changed for the night, and are to be washed. He considers a monk's outfit to consist of two cowls (or cloaks), two tunics, shoes and socks (or perhaps gaiters), girdle, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, and writing tablet (c. LV); a great contrast with the poverty and nakedness practised in Egypt.

Certain features of the Rule appear austere to us in the twentieth century. For instance, perpetual abstinence from flesh meat, except in case of sickness, is considered a great

[1] *Lausiac History of Palladius*, i, 252, where the references will be found.
[2] *Commentaire*, p. 307.

austerity to-day; but to the agricultural labourers of Italy in St Benedict's time it would not have seemed so. Nor would the privation of baths have seemed a hardship to Italian peasants of the sixth century. St Benedict made his monks rise very early, at about two a.m. during the greater part of the year, and still earlier in the summer; but they had gone to bed before dark, and had had a prolonged period of unbroken sleep: the idea often held, even by Benedictines, that the 'midnight office' of the Carthusians, breaking the night's rest into two portions, is what St Benedict intended, is not in accordance with fact.

The only feature of the life that probably was severe, even to St Benedict's monks, was the single meal a day. For about half the year, from Easter till mid-September, there were two meals, at mid-day and in the evening; this would not be considered a severe régime even by Italians of the upper classes in our own day: it is the actual practice at Monte Cassino. But from mid-September till Lent there was but one meal, at about 2.30 p.m. Here it will be appropriate to quote from a writer who knew Italians and their ways so well as the late Marion Crawford: 'Breakfast as we understand it is an unknown meal in Italy even now. Most people drink a cup of black coffee standing; many eat a morsel of bread or biscuit with it, and get out of doors as soon as they can; but the greediness of an Anglo-Saxon breakfast disgusts all Latins alike, and two set meals daily are thought to be enough for any one; as indeed they are. The hard-working Italian hill peasant will sometimes toast himself a piece of corn bread before going to work, and eat it with a few drops of olive oil; and in absence of tea or coffee, the people of the Middle Ages often drank a mouthful of wine on rising, "to move the blood," as they said. But that was all.'[1]

The Lenten régime, indeed, with its rising at two, and working in the fields from nine till four, without breaking the fast until the single meal in the late afternoon, must have been a severe physical strain on St Benedict's monks. But in those days Lent was intended to be a severe physical strain on all Christians, and St Benedict's single meal shortly before sunset was still the common discipline of the Church for all her

[1] *Ave Roma Immortalis*, i, 238.

children. St Benedict considered that the manner of life he established in his monastery would be enough, on the physical side, to enable his monks to arrive at the perfection of the monastic life; and so far from encouraging them to try to go beyond the Rule by practising austerities on their own account, he discouraged private venture in asceticism, and made it a point of virtue that 'the monk should do nothing except what the common rule of the monastery and the example of superiors exhorts' (c. VII),[1] and that 'in all things all should follow the Rule as mistress' (c. III). The only exception St Benedict tolerated was water drinking (c. XL). In Lent he encourages each to add something voluntarily to the ordinary duties of our service of God in the way of some ascetical exercise beyond the Rule; but even then it was to be indicated to the abbot and undertaken only with his approval and blessing (c. XLIX).

It may be thought that this point is being unduly laboured; but it is vital for any true understanding of St Benedict, and it has very commonly been misunderstood, even by Benedictines. Not a few Benedictine reforms, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also in more recent times, have been in great measure based on the idea of restoring the austerity deliberately discarded by St Benedict. Traces of this misconception of St Benedict's spirit exist at the present day. On November 13 Benedictines celebrate a feast sometimes called 'All Monks,' but in the official calendar 'All Benedictine Saints.' In the hymn occur the following lines:

> Vobis olus cibaria
> Fuere vel legumina,
> Potumque lympha praebuit,
> Humusque dura lectulum.
> Vixistis inter aspides
> Saevisque cum draconibus.

For a general feast of All Monks no exception could be taken to the hymn; for Benedictines would only find their place in the great crowd of monks of all kinds, Fathers of the Desert,

[1] This is part of the description of the Signs of Humility which St Benedict in great measure took over from Cassian (see my edition of the *Regula*, p. 37). It occurs in what purports to be the reproduction of an address on the cenobitical life which Cassian heard an abbot in Egypt make to an aspirant whom he was receiving (*Inst.* iv, 32-43).

hermits, Syriac and Celtic monks, and the rest: and it would seem this was the hymn-writer's intention:

Avete solitudinis
Claustrique mites incolae!

But for a specifically Benedictine feast the hymn is singularly ill-chosen, being pitched in a wrong key. For vegetable diet, water-drinking, sleeping on the bare ground, living with snakes and dragons,—not one of these things, though true of St Benedict himself in the Sacro Speco, is any part of Benedictine life, and they are all in direct contradiction to the provisions of the Rule.[1]

Another instance may be produced from our own day. The crypt at Monte Cassino has recently been gorgeously and beautifully decorated by Benedictine monks of the Beuron Congregation, and was solemnly reopened in 1913. In the carvings and reliefs St Benedict and his monks are in bare feet, or in some cases with light sandals, like the discalced Carmelites. It will not be questioned that the human foot is a more beautiful object, and lends itself more easily to artistic treatment, than a boot. But St Benedict says quite definitely 'foot-gear' (indumenta pedum), whatever be the precise meaning of 'pedules' and 'caligae,' probably the sixth-century equivalent of socks and shoes (c. LV, 10, 23, 39). It is regrettable that at Monte Cassino of all places, so grotesque a notion,

[1] In matter of food, there is no reason whatever for supposing that St Benedict intended a purely vegetable diet; eggs, milk, butter, cheese were allowed, and fish where available. The earliest commentary on the Rule, that of Paul the Deacon (*cir.* 775), specifies cheese, eggs, and fish as articles of the monks' ordinary diet. As for meat, in c. XXXVI, St Benedict prescribes abstinence from flesh meat for all except the sick; but in c. XXXIX he says 'the flesh of quadrupeds.' This has from an early date given rise to the question whether fowls might be eaten. The tradition at Monte Cassino in the eighth century was that they might; but there was a break of more than a century in the life of Monte Cassino, so that its traditions do not go back to St Benedict. The idea that birds are to be classed with fish rather than with four-footed animals is based on Gen. i, 20, 21, where birds as well as fish are produced from the waters. The idea was familiarised by the Thursday vesper hymn:

Magnae Deus potentiae
Qui ex aquis ortum genus
Partim remittis gurgiti,
Partim levas in aera.

The question is curiously discussed by the standard commentators on the Rule, e.g. Calmet, and in the Preface of Herrgott's *Vetus Disciplina Monastica.*

and one so alien from St Benedict's mind, as barefooted Benedictines, should even seem to be countenanced.

For like reasons, the familiar presentation of St Benedict in the early Umbrian School, finger on lip and rod in hand, as though silence and chastisement were the keynotes of the Rule, though appropriate enough for St Columban, is, as symbolising St Benedict's spirit, a parody, doubly regrettable in such masters as Giotto and Perugino, in other cases so sympathetically appreciative of the spirit of the saints. They probably reflected a wave of reforming rigorism in the Benedictine houses around them.

To sum up the matter of Benedictine asceticism, so far as it concerns the practice of bodily austerities. St Benedict found monasticism in Italy and in Gaul languishing, sinking under the weight of ideals and practices inherited from the East, but unsuited to Western conditions. To meet the case, he did not gather up what remained still in exercise of the primitive austerities and attempt a restoration of the old ascetic life, but struck out a new line, such as seemed to him more fitting for the times and circumstances. And whereas a strong individualism was the keynote of Egyptian monachism in all its phases, in western Europe hardly less than in Egypt, St Benedict was a collectivist in the spiritual order. In place of rivalry in ascetical achievement, he established a common mode of life made up of a round of objective duties, none too onerous, common prayer, work, and reading; and the sanctification of the monk was to be found in living the life of the community.

This twofold break with the past, in the elimination of austerity and in the sinking of the individual in the community, made St Benedict's Rule less a development than a revolution in monachism. It may almost be called a new creation; and it was destined to prove, as the subsequent history shows, peculiarly adapted to the new races that were re-peopling western Europe.

# CHAPTER V

## ST BENEDICT'S TEACHING ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

IF St Benedict thought, and as the event showed, rightly thought, that he could eliminate from the monastic life the element of corporal austerity as it had been understood and practised before his time, it goes without saying that he by no means supposed asceticism could be dispensed with. Asceticism, as we have seen, means training in the spiritual life, both in the negative aspect of purging from soul and character all that is sinful, imperfect, selfish; and in the positive aspect of cultivating, building up, all that is good and holy. It thus embraces mortification and the practice of the virtues; and it is, in effect, that aiming at and tending to 'perfection' that is one of the recognised obligations of the religious life in every form. It is the department of the spiritual life which has to do with ourselves and our own souls, and the process of purification that will make them such as may draw near to God.

Though it is possible to extract from the Rule St Benedict's teaching on the spiritual life, he nowhere gives any scientific or ordered exposition of a general theory of its course. But such theory is to be found in Cassian, and Cassian we know was St Benedict's spiritual book of predilection. In two places in the Rule he tells his monks to read Cassian, and the Index Scriptorum to my edition of the *Regula* (p. 176) shows that the references to Cassian are more numerous, and also more considerable, than to any other author; and if the references be examined, it will appear that St Benedict was familiar with Cassian's writings, and was saturated with their thought and language, in a greater measure than with any other, save only the Holy Scriptures. So in giving Cassian's theory of the spiritual life we may be sure we are giving the ideas practically accepted by St Benedict.

It is in the fourteenth Conference, that of Abbot Nesteros on Spiritual Knowledge, that we find a formal exposition of the course of the spiritual life (Bishop Gibson's translation, in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Library, is followed, the text being compressed).

Spiritual knowledge is twofold: first *πρακτική*, *actualis*, practical, which is brought about by an improvement of morals and purification from faults; secondly, *θεωρητική*, which consists in the contemplation of things divine and the knowledge of most sacred thoughts (1). Whoever would arrive at this theoretical (contemplative) knowledge must first pursue practical knowledge with all his might and main. For this practical knowledge can be acquired without the contemplative, but the contemplative cannot possibly be gained without the practical. . . . In vain does one strive for the vision of God, who does not shun the stains of sin (2). This practical perfection depends on a double system; for its first method is to know the nature of all faults and the manner of their cure. Its second, to discover the order of the virtues, and form our mind by their perfection. For in what way will one, who has neither succeeded in understanding the nature of his own faults, nor tried to eradicate them, be able to gain an understanding of virtues, which is the second stage of practical training, or the mysteries of spiritual and heavenly things, which exist in the higher stage of contemplative knowledge? (3)[1] The practical life is distributed among many different professions and interests. For some make it their whole purpose to aim at the secrecy of the anchorite, and to be joined to God by the silence of solitude. Some have given all their efforts and interests to the system of the cenobitic life and the care of the brethren. Some are pleased with the kindly service of the guest-house and hospitality—as Macarius presided over the guest-house in Alexandria in such a way as to be considered inferior to none of those who aimed at the retirement of the desert. Some choose the care of the sick, others devote themselves to intercession for the afflicted and the oppressed, or give themselves up to teaching or almsgiving to the poor (4). Wherefore it is good and profitable for each one to endeavour with all his might and main to attain perfection in the work that has been begun, according to the line he has chosen as the grace which he has received; and while he praises and admires the virtues of others, not to swerve from his own line which he has once for all chosen (5). For those who are not yet settled in the line which they have taken up are often, when they hear some praised for different pursuits and

[1] On this compare *Coll.* ix, 2-6.

virtues, so stirred up by the praise of them that they try forthwith to imitate their method. It is an impossibility for one and the same man to excel at once in all the good deeds enumerated above. . . . In many ways men advance towards God, and so each man should complete that one which he has once fixed upon, never changing the course of his purpose, so that he may be perfect in whatever line of life his may be (6). Endeavour with all eagerness to gain in the first place a thorough grasp of practical, that is ethical, discipline. For without this, theoretic (contemplative) purity cannot be obtained (9).

As used in this passage, the 'actual life' is quite different from the 'active life' of St Gregory and later writers, for it includes as one of its forms the life of hermits. Any form of Christian life may afford the exercising ground for the practice of virtue that is required for Cassian's actual life. One form is the cenobitic life, and this is the form chosen by St Benedict for his monks,—'persevering in God's teaching until death in the monastery, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ.'[1]

Cassian's teaching on the spiritual life is further illustrated in the first Conference:

The end of our profession indeed is the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven: but the immediate aim or goal (the scope) is *purity of heart*, without which no one can gain that end. Fixing our gaze then steadily on this goal, as if on a definite mark, let us direct our course as straight towards it as possible (4). Whatever can help to guide us to this object, viz. purity of heart, we must follow with all our might, but whatever hinders us from it, we must shun as a dangerous and hurtful thing. For, for this we do and endure all things, for this we make light of our kinsfolk, our country, honours, riches, the delights of this world, and all kinds of pleasures; namely, in order that we may retain a lasting purity of heart. And so when this object is set before us, we shall always direct our actions and thoughts straight towards the attainment of it; and if it be not constantly fixed before our eyes, all our toils will be vain and useless and endured to no purpose (5). Everything should be done and sought after by us for the sake of this. For this we must seek for solitude, for this we know that we ought to submit to fastings, vigils, toils, bodily nakedness, reading, and all other virtues, that through them

[1] 'In eius doctrina usque ad mortem in monasterio perseverantes, passionibus Christi per patientiam participemur' (*Prol. fin.*).

we may be enabled to prepare our heart and to keep it unharmed by all evil passions, and resting on these steps to mount to the perfection of charity. . . . Those things which are of secondary importance, such as fastings, vigils, withdrawal from the world, meditation on Scripture, we ought to practise with a view to our main object, i.e. purity of heart. . . . Fasting, vigils, meditation on the Scriptures, self-denial, and the abnegation of all possessions are not perfection, but aids to perfection: because the end of that science does not lie in these, but by means of these we arrive at the end (7).

The following summary of the way to perfection may also be cited: The beginning of salvation and of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. From the fear of the Lord arises salutary compunction. From compunction of heart springs renunciation, i.e. nakedness and contempt of all possessions. From nakedness is begotten humility; from humility the mortification of desires. Through mortification of desires all faults are extirpated and decay. By the driving out of faults virtues shoot up and increase. By the budding of virtues purity of heart is gained. By purity of heart the perfection of apostolic love is acquired (Institutes, iv, 43).

With this background to St Benedict's mind we may come to his own teaching on interior asceticism and the spiritual life. He places his asceticism primarily in the renunciation of self-will, and on this he is as insistent, as uncompromising, as in matters of corporal austerity he is indulgent. At the very outset he says to those who come to the monastic life under his guidance, that he addresses such as 'renounce their own wills' (Prol.).[1] And in the course of the Rule the same idea is insisted on again and again. We are forbidden to do our own will (c. VII, grad. 1); we must abandon it (c. V); we must hate it (c. IV); we must not through love of our own will take pleasure in carrying out our own desires (c. VII, grad. 2); no one in the monastery is to follow the will of his own heart (c. III); and 'it is not lawful for monks to have either their bodies or their wills at their own disposal' (c. XXXIII). Finally, St Benedict's very description of cenobitical life is as follows:

[1] 'Ad te ergo nunc mihi sermo dirigitur, quisquis abrenuntians propriis voluntatibus, Domino Christo vero Regi militaturus, oboedientiae fortissima et praeclara arma sumis' (*Prol.* 7). The other pieces here cited will all be found in the 'Medulla Doctrinae' appended to my edition of the *Regula*, p. 153.

They do not live by their own free will,
or obey their own desires and pleasures,
but walk by another's judgement and command,
and living in monasteries,
desire that an abbot be over them.[1]

This renunciation of self-will translates itself in action into the three recognised vows of religion: it will express itself in ready obedience to another's will, in detachment and poverty, in purity of heart and chastity. Thus it is the very root of self-discipline and the practice of virtue, or asceticism in its highest acceptance; and by thus singling it out as the thing that above all matters, St Benedict showed himself as the great religious genius he was. It is the denying oneself; and as St Gregory says: 'It is a less thing to renounce what one has; but it is an exceeding great thing to renounce what one is.' It is to be noticed that he does not say that we are to mortify, to kill, our own will, so as to become merely indifferent: this idea is often inculcated by the Egyptian monks and by later religious legislators. It is remarkable that though the words 'mortificare' and 'mortificatio' are common in Cassian, they are nowhere used by St Benedict. He takes for granted that self-will is always alive in us—as of course it is; and so the most he tells us is to 'hate it.' Could it be once for all destroyed we should be deprived of the principal means of ascetical discipline. And it is a means that can constantly be used: at every moment, in things small and great, at every call of duty, when up against any rule, in any trouble, trial, temptation, in all our dealings with others—everywhere self comes in, everywhere is there self-will to be combated and conquered. It is the overcoming of self, the elimination of selfishness: it is, in short, that self-denial that is the root of the spiritual life: 'If any one wish to come after Me, let him deny himself' (Matt. xvi, 24). And St Benedict relied on this all-embracing spiritual mortification to effect in his monks that purifying of spirit that is the object of asceticism.

When we look at the positive side of asceticism, Cassian's second part of the 'actual life,' viz. the training in virtue, we

[1] 'Non suo arbitrio viventes, vel desideriis suis et voluptatibus obedientes, sed ambulantes alieno iudicio et imperio, in coenobiis degentes, abbatem sibi praeesse desiderant' (c. v).

find that St Benedict's formal teaching on the spiritual life is contained in cc. IV-VII, and especially in c. IV on 'The Instruments of Good Works,' and c. VII on 'Humility.' We refer, once for all, to Abbot Delatte's excellent and practical Commentary on these two chapters, where their teaching is clearly and solidly brought out. Only certain aspects will be noted here.

The Instruments are seventy-five spiritual and moral precepts of miscellaneous character; they include the Ten Commandments and the corporal and spiritual Works of Mercy, and of the others, some are derived from Scripture, and a few from other sources, but most have not been traced to any source. The Instruments afford a wide and varied field of ascetical training, and St Benedict gives them to his monks as 'the instruments or tools of the spiritual art, which are to be used incessantly day and night in the workshop of the monastery' (c. IV *fin.*); and so the declarations of the English Congregation direct this chapter often to be read and meditated upon 'so that the precepts inculcated in it may always be for us the norm of our life.' It is worthy of note that in St Benedict's Instruments there is nothing monastic or 'religious' in the technical sense: they are all mere Christianity, elementary morality, fundamental religion.

But any formal presentation by St Benedict of a theory of the spiritual life must be sought in the great chapter on Humility, which has become a classic in ascetical literature. There is no question of giving any set commentary here, but only the barest indication of the doctrine. Abbot Delatte's Commentary may again be referred to, and also the masterly chapter on Humility in Fr Baker's *Sancta Sophia*, which seems to bring out the deepest meaning of St Benedict's teaching Though 'humility' is the word used throughout by St Benedict, at the beginning it is equated with 'discipline,' which shows that under the term humility is included all that is meant by self-discipline or asceticism.

As is well known, St Benedict marks twelve 'degrees' of humility; the fourth to eleventh are in large measure suggested by Cassian (see my edition of the *Regula*, p. 37): but the first three and the last are St Benedict's own. The first degree embraces the most fundamental truths of religion

which must pervade our minds at all times and be the groundwork of the spiritual life in us: the fear of God and mindfulness of His commandments; the sense that we are always in God's presence, and that all our thoughts and actions lie open to His sight, and the realisation that He is at all times present with us. St Thomas sums up this degree as 'reverence to God,' and declares that it is the root of humility.[1] Humility is indeed fundamentally the realisation of the truth, as regards God, ourselves, and our relation to Him; and the acting on such realisation.

The next two degrees are concerned with renunciation of self-will and obedience: that we love not our own will and delight not in fulfilling our own desires, and that for God's love we subject ourselves with all obedience to our superior. Then follow four degrees of extreme difficulty, that take us to the heights of self-conquest: that if in obedience things hard and distasteful, or even what injuries soever, are laid upon us, our conscience do silently embrace them, and enduring them do neither grow weary nor fall away; that the monk hide not from his abbot in humble confession his evil thoughts and secret actions, i.e. not as matter of sacramental confession; that the monk be contented with the meanest and worst of everything (omni vilitate vel extremitate), and whatever be enjoined him, judge himself a bad and worthless workman; that not only with his tongue do he pronounce himself, but also in the inmost feeling of his heart believe himself, lower and viler than all others: this last might seem impossible, were it not that in such cases as St Teresa's and others we have examples of the holiest souls penetrated by an absolute and sincere conviction that they were the most unworthy and abject of creatures.

The last five degrees are concerned with the effects of humility on conduct and demeanour.

It will be seen that St Benedict's conception of humility is much wider and deeper than the usual connotation of the word, being the equivalent, as he makes it, of 'discipline' or training in the spiritual life; so that here we have his full doctrine of asceticism, the exercises he relied on for the

[1] *Summa*, 2-2, clxi, 6; his treatment of the 'degrees' is interesting, but more ingenious than convincing.

formation and growth of his monks in holiness. It is nothing short of renunciation in an heroic degree. Yet St Benedict is not framing any mere theoretical or academic scheme of virtue; he intends his monks to practise all these degrees of humility, for he says: 'If we wish'—and he manifestly takes for granted that we do—'to attain,' not merely to humility, not merely to a high kind of humility, but 'to the summit of the highest humility' (summae humilitatis culmen), then must these rungs of the ladder be mounted. And at the end he declares: 'When all these degrees of humility have been climbed, the monk will straightway come to that perfect love of God which casteth out fear.' The Benedictine monk must therefore not look on the difficult degrees as heights out of reach and mere ideals not intended for him; on the contrary, he is required to work seriously all his life at the acquirement of all the degrees of humility, even the highest and hardest. And he has St Benedict's assurance, an assurance amply vouched for by history, that this spiritual asceticism will do for him as much as the corporal austerities of the older, and also of newer, monachism, and will bring him surely to that love of God that is the one ultimate object of the monastic life.

It will have been noticed that the renunciation St Benedict calls for always comes back, one way or another, to the renunciation of the will; it is always 'one's own will' (propria voluntas) that has to be renounced. Nothing is said of renunciation of the affections. And yet this principle of the mortification of the affections, under the name of Detachment, plays a prominent rôle in modern schools of asceticism and spirituality, and especially in the case of those devoted to the religious life. But such teaching has found its place in asceticism from the beginning, and conspicuously among the monks of Egypt. Probably the great apostle of detachment is the Carmelite mystic St John of the Cross, the friend of St Teresa, who in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* pursues the matter with scientific method and unrelenting logic through each faculty of the mind, each power of the soul, urging that for the spiritual man no joy, no pleasure, in anything, whether natural or spiritual, is admissible, there being 'nothing in which a man may rejoice except in serving God' (Bk. iii, c. 19).

Such sentences as the following abound: 'The spiritual Christian ought to suppress all joy in created things because it is offensive in the sight of God' (*ibid.*). And he shrinks from no deductions: it is vanity for wife and husband to rejoice in marriage, or to desire children, 'for they know not if they shall be servants of God' (c. 17). Probably no other Christian teacher has pushed the doctrine of detachment to a limit so extreme; but others do teach a similar theory. For instance, Fr Augustine Baker, though in the matter of bodily mortification most moderate, in the matter of affections propounds a view of detachment that is a hard saying: 'The duty of a Christian, much more of a soul that aspires to perfection, is to love nothing at all but God or in order to Him; that is, as a mean and instrument to beget and increase His divine love in our souls. All adhesion to creatures by affection, whether such affection be great or small, is accordingly sinful, more or less; so that, if being deprived of any thing or persons whatsoever, or being pained by anything, we find a trouble and sorrow in our minds for the loss or suffering of the thing itself, such trouble, in what degree soever, argues that our affection was sinful, not only because the affection was excessive, but because it was an affection, the object whereof was not God.' He explains, indeed, that he means an affection 'seated in the superior soul or rational will,' not one 'confined to sensitive nature'; and sums up: 'To the superior will all things but God must be indifferent as in and for themselves, and only to be loved as they are serviceable to the spirit.'[1] Most modern writers would tone down such doctrine and recognise the lawfulness and goodness of the primary natural affections; but in matter of friendships an extreme rigour prevails, especially in the various forms of religious life, so that what is demanded is not so much the regulation and sanctification of the affections, as their suppression.

Precepts and examples of an extreme detachment are frequent among the Egyptian monks, especially in regard to the family relationships and affections. And here it is possible to

[1] *Sancta Sophia*, pp. 200, 201. This teaching of Fr Baker on detachment, thus imposed as of obligation on all, as also some of the principles laid down in his chapter on 'Purity of Intention,' appear to inculcate a rigorism that is counter to accepted fundamental principles of Moral Theology.

produce another antithesis, like those of the preceding chapter, illustrating the difference between St Benedict's ideas and those prevalent in Egypt. Palladius relates of Abbot Pior of Nitria that on leaving his father's house as a young man in order to become a monk, he made a vow never again to see any of his family. And after fifty years his old sister became possessed with a longing to see him, and begged the bishop to use his influence to make him come out of the desert and visit her. So Pior went to her house and standing outside shut his eyes and called to her that he was there, and bade her come out and look at him. And she could not persuade him to enter the house, but praying on the threshold with closed eyes, he departed again to the desert.[1] What a contrast is this to St Benedict's treatment of his sister Scholastica. Every year she came to a house near the monastery and they used to spend the day together till nightfall; and on her death Benedict had her body brought and laid in the grave prepared for himself, so that 'as their minds were always one in God, so their bodies were not separated in the grave.'[2]

When we examine the Rule we find no exhortation to renunciation of the affections among either the Instruments of Good Works or the degrees of Humility. St Benedict warns the abbot he must not love one more than another, 'except him whom he finds better in good actions and obedience' (c. II, 47); he is to love (diligere) his monks, and to try to win their affection (amari studeat) (c. LXIV, 28, 37): and the monks in turn should love their abbot with sincere and humble love (c. LXXII, 12). The elder monks are to love the younger (cc. IV, 87, LXIII, 23), and the younger to obey the elder with all charity (c. LXXI, 8), and all are to cherish fraternal charity with love chastely (c. LXXII, 11). There is no ground for supposing that in these passages the words 'diligere,' 'amare,' do not bear their real meaning of 'love.' On the contrary, they suggest that the great natural family relations and affections were intended by St Benedict to hold sway in his spiritual family—the love of father for sons, and sons for father, and brothers for one another, after the example of the mutual love of Benedict and Scholastica.

There is no surer interpretation of the spirit of a religious

[1] *Lausiac History*, c. xxxix. [2] St Gregory, *Dial.* ii, 33, 34.

Rule than the practice of the saints who lived under it. St Bernard's theory on natural affection and detachment stands out clear in the lament on the death of his own brother Gerard, a monk with him at Clairvaux:

My very bowels are torn away; and it is said to me, 'Do not feel any pain.' But I do feel pain, and that in spite of myself; I have not the insensibility of a stone, nor is my flesh of bronze; I have feeling assuredly, and sharp pain, and my trouble is ever in my sight. I have confessed my great affliction, and denied it not. Some one has called this carnal; I do not deny that it is human, just as I do not deny that I am a man. If that does not suffice, then I shall not deny that it is carnal. Nevertheless I do not desire to oppose at all the decrees of the Holy One. Is it reasonable to declare that I call in question the sentence because I feel the penalty keenly? To feel is human, but to repine would be impious. It is human, I repeat, and unavoidable that we should not be indifferent to those who are our friends; that we should enjoy their presence, and lament its being taken from us. Social intercourse, particularly among friends, will not be tedious; the reluctance to separate, and the pain which is felt by each when separated, shows plainly the effect that their mutual affection has had upon those who live together.[1]

St Bernard clearly does not come up to the standard of detachment required by St John of the Cross and Fr Baker; and the above, be it noted, was spoken to his monks.

In the Introduction to the *Monks of the West*, Montalembert speaks on the subject of friendships in the cloister.[2] He brings forward, not only from St Bernard, but from St Anselm and many another great figure in Benedictine history, passages, some of a southern warmth of expression, which show how real, how devoted, how truly human, were the affections they did not hesitate to entertain and give scope to. Yet St Bernard and St Anselm were saints, and stand out as strong men in an age when men were strong. This shows that the kind of detachment called for by St John of the Cross and many modern spiritual writers is at any rate not necessary for sanctity: at most it is only one kind of holiness; there is

[1] *Serm. on Canticle*, xxvi, 9, 10 (Eales' trans.); the whole sermon may be read.

[2] Chapter v.

another to be attained without it, which lies not in the suppression but in the due regulation and sanctification of the affections. And the example of the great Benedictine saints, including St Benedict himself, the indications of the Rule, and the analogies of St Benedict's attitude to bodily austerities, which is one of temperance, not total abstinence, 'servata in omnibus parcitate,' all lead to the conclusion that the latter is the authentic Benedictine idea of detachment.

Both views can find support in the Gospels. There are utterances of our Lord that seem to call for detachment even the most rigorous; on the other hand, we are allowed to see that He had His human friendships and gave scope to His human affections. And the appeal to the example of our Lord brings us to the final touchstone of the spiritual life, which in all its forms must be for Christians a Following of Christ. This St Benedict knew well; and so his Rule begins with Christ, ever dwells on Christ, and ends with Him. The aspirant to the monastic life is addressed as one going to serve as a soldier of Christ (Prologue); the monk is by faith to see Christ in all, in the abbot, in the guests, in the poor, in the sick; in self-denial he follows Christ, in obedience he imitates Him, by patience he shares His sufferings, by love of Him will he come to perfect charity; he is to place nothing before the love of Christ, nor deem anything dearer to him than Christ; and finally, the last words of the Rule proper (for the final chapter is an appendix) are that he is to prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ.[1] And this is the sum of St Benedict's teaching on the Spiritual Life.

[1] For the references see p. 168 of my edition of the *Regula*.

# CHAPTER VI

## ST BENEDICT'S TEACHING ON PRAYER

IN the third chapter, that, namely, on 'St Benedict's Idea,' the place in Benedictine life of common prayer, the public celebration in choir of the canonical office, has been explained. It remains now to speak of that other kind of prayer which St Benedict calls 'peculiaris,' or private.

That St Benedict himself cultivated the spirit of prayer goes without saying; it goes without saying that he imitated the Master and Model who would go forth to a mountain and pass the night in 'the prayer of God' (Luke vi, 12). And so we see him in like manner repairing to the tower at Monte Cassino to spend some time in prayer before the hour of the night office, and we know that it was on such an occasion he had the unwonted experience of mystic vision described by St Gregory (Dialogues, ii, 35), the fruit no doubt of the seeds of prayer sown in his heart in those years in the cave, and fructifying ever since. We know, too, that he used to spend time by day at prayer in his cell (Dialogues ii, 11). And so there is definite evidence of what in fact requires no evidence, that so great a religious founder from whom were to flow forth so many streams of religious influence to irrigate the world in all succeeding ages, was himself a man of prayer, who cultivated in a high degree the practice of private interior prayer.

If it be asked whether St Benedict established, either as a public community exercise or as a duty to be performed in private, any prescribed daily period during which the monks should exercise the prayer that is now called 'mental prayer,' the answer is that in the Rule there is no clear provision for any such set exercise, nor is any trace of it to be found in Benedictine records for several centuries, indeed until the

fifteenth or sixteenth century. To this last statement there is, so far as I know, a single exception, contained in one of the stories told by St Gregory in his Life of St Benedict. As the point is one of interest the outlines of the story are worth repeating. In one of St Benedict's twelve monasteries at Subiaco was a monk who could not remain steadfast at prayer, but when at the appointed hour, after the psalmody was over, the brethren bent down for the pursuit of prayer (studium orationis, the expression used also in c. 11 to describe St Benedict's own private prayer in his cell), he used to go forth and carry on earthly and transitory businesses. And being often admonished by his abbot without avail, he was taken to St Benedict, who sternly reprimanded him; for two days he stayed in for the prayer, and on his relapsing after the second day, St Benedict went to the monastery and dealt with the case himself.[1]

I venture to think that the commentators on the Rule and other writers on Benedictine life have been so impressed by the absence of reference to set mental prayer in Benedictine tradition, that they have not given to this story the consideration it deserves. They are wont to interpret the prayer after the office that it speaks of, as being much the same as the prayers Cassian says the Egyptian monks used to intercalate after each psalm. But that prayer lasted only a few minutes;[2]

[1] 'Quidam monachus erat qui ad orationem stare non poterat: sed mox ut se fratres ad studium oratiònis inclinassent, ipse egrediebatur foras, et mente vaga terrena aliqua et transitoria agebat. Quumque ab abbate suo saepius fuisset admonitus, ad virum Dei ductus est, qui ipse quoque ejus stultitiam vehementer increpavit, et admonasterium reversus, vix duobus diebus viri Dei admonitionem tenuit. Nam die tertia ad usum proprium reversus, vagari tempore orationis coepit. Quod cum servo Dei ab eodem monasterii patre quem constituerat, nuntiatum fuisset, dixit: Ego venio, eumque per memetipsum emendo. Cumque vir Dei venisset ad idem monasterium, et constituta hora, expleta psalmodia, sese fratres in orationem dedissent,' etc. . . . 'ad orationis studium immobilis permansit' (*Dial.* II, 4).

[2] The method of celebrating the office among the Egyptian monks is explained by Cassian in Bk. ii of the Institutes. There were only two public offices each day, the night office, and vespers or evensong, each consisting of twelve psalms. Each psalm was recited right through by a single voice, the rest listening while seated on low benches. At the end of each psalm all arose and stood in silent prayer 'for a few moments,' and then prostrated themselves on the ground, but only 'for the briefest space of time'; after which they stood erect again and prayed with outstretched hands while he who had chanted the psalm 'collected the prayer,' that is, uttered aloud a collect or prayer, whether extempore or in fixed form does not appear. The psalms were followed by two lessons from Holy Scripture.

whereas St Gregory's story implies one of some duration: it was so prolonged as to be a definite strain and burden, so prolonged as to be worth while risking a 'vehement reprimand' from St Benedict himself for the sake of escaping it, so prolonged as to allow of some other work being done outside while it was going on. The story certainly postulates something like a half-hour of prayer, and shows, moreover, that it was a daily exercise.[1] Knowing that such a practice existed in St Benedict's monasteries, we are able to fix better the meaning of an injunction in the Rule that prayer made in common—and the context relates to private or interior prayer—is to be quite short, and when the superior gives the signal all are to rise together:[2] there can be no doubt this refers to the 'studium orationis' after the psalmody. In such matter as prayer, brevity and length are relative terms, and to St Benedict and his monks half an hour may have seemed a short time for prayer. If it be asked how it is that there is no trace of this practice in the life of Benedictine monasteries throughout the Middle Ages, it may be replied that the practice did exist in St Benedict's own monasteries, and was a normal feature in St Gregory's concept of Benedictine life; that we have no detailed knowledge of the life of Benedictine houses until the end of the eighth and the course of the ninth century, when the earliest extant commentaries on the Rule and consuetudinaries were composed; that at that date the enormous increase in the church services, masses, additional offices, and devotional accretions to the canonical office as fixed by St Benedict, had set in, and took so long a time that very likely by the date in question the period of private prayer after the office had been gradually curtailed and at last wholly crowded out. If this view be correct, it follows that the introduction in the fifteenth century of the daily set half-hour's mental prayer in choir was a return to primitive practice. At the present day, at least one half-hour daily devoted to mental prayer, to be made either as a community act in the church or privately, is prescribed in the constitutions or declarations of all Benedictine congrega-

[1] This view is adopted by Haeften (*Disquisitiones*, 'Vita,' p. 89), and by Calmet (on c. VIII), in my judgement two of the best of the commentators on the Rule.

[2] 'In conventu omnino brevietur oratio, et facto signo a priore omnes pariter surgant' (c. XX).

tions as a duty binding on their monks ; and this we have good reason to believe is in entire conformity with St Benedict's mind.

But besides this mental prayer in common at the termination of the office, St Benedict contemplates private prayer during the day as an exercise of personal devotion, according to the call and enablement of each one. He contemplates the monks repairing privately to the oratory to pray in secret, and provides that nothing be done that might impede those that are at prayer.[1] One of the special exercises he suggests for Lent is to increase such private prayers.[2] Indeed, it goes without saying that this cultivation of prayer must be a principal ingredient in any monastic or religious life.

St Benedict's instructions on this private personal prayer are to be found in c. XX on 'Reverence in Prayer,' and in c. LII on 'the Oratory of the Monastery.' They are of the shortest: in the 'Medulla Doctrinae' or Catechism on the Rule attached to my edition, the question is asked: What method of prayer did St Benedict teach? And the answer is taken from c. LII: 'If any one wishes to pray, let him simply go into the oratory and pray'; as if taking for granted that every one knows how to pray naturally, and needs no instructions in order to be able to do so. But the two chapters just named contain each a balanced description as to the qualities of prayer:

c. XX: Not in much talking,
but in purity of heart,
and compunction of tears.

c. LII: Not in a loud voice
but in tears
and intentness (intentio) of heart.

This suggests a very simple and downright prayer, in which the operations of the imagination and reasoning are silent, and those of heart and will only, or mainly, are active. To use modern nomenclature, it was not 'discoursive' meditation. St Benedict's 'meditatio' was a quite different exercise from that now so called ; it was not a reflecting on a religious truth

[1] 'Qui sibi peculiariter vult orare' (c. LII).
[2] 'Orationes peculiares' (c. XLIX).

or a thinking out of some point, but was a meditative, prayerful reading of Holy Scripture or some pious book. The mental prayer inculcated by St Benedict was rather what is called 'affective prayer' or 'prayer of simple regard,' the soul being lovingly intent on God. More will be said on it in the next two chapters.

St Benedict lays down that private prayer should be short, unless it be prolonged by devotion due to the inspiration of divine grace (c. XX), so that its duration is to be determined by the enablement received from the Holy Ghost. It should, however, be frequent, for one of the Instruments is 'often to give oneself up to prayer.' Both injunctions are in conformity with Cassian's instructions that private prayers should be short but very frequent (Institutes, ii, 10; Collations, ix, 36). St Benedict's meaning may be further illustrated by a passage of St Augustine which we may well suppose he had in mind when writing c. XX:

> The brethren in Egypt are said to have frequent prayers indeed, but very short and, as it were, suddenly ejaculated; lest that intentness, watchfully alert, which is above all needful to him who prays, should by too long tarrying be dissipated or dulled. And hereby they themselves sufficiently show that this intentness must not be blunted if it has not power to last, or again, if it can last, must not be quickly broken off (*Ep.* cxxx, 20, ad Probam).

Another quality of prayer desired by St Benedict is that it be 'pure,' and this expression is very significant, for it was a technical term used often by Cassian, and so it enables us to obtain a much clearer insight than hitherto into St Benedict's ideas and doctrine on prayer. Just as we were able in the preceding chapter to construct St Benedict's ascetical treatise or manual out of Cassian's Collations XIV and I, so in Collations IX and X have we what he used as his Treatise on Prayer; in these two wonderful conferences of Abbot Isaac of Scete the theory and practice of prayer are unfolded with a richness, an elevation, and a practicality that have never been surpassed.

It is very noteworthy that every one of St Benedict's prescriptions on prayer, as collected above, is found in the ninth Conference:

(The references are to the chapters of this Conference; those added in brackets are to other places of Cassian.)

*Non in multiloquio* (Matt. vi, 7).

*non in clamosa voce:*

'We should pray in silence and not distract our brethren by whisperings or cries' (clamores), 35.

*in puritate cordis:*

'Purity of heart' is the principal condition of prayer, 8, 15 (cf. what has been cited in chapter V from Collation I on purity of heart).

*in intentione cordis:*

'Intentness of heart' is a character of prayer, 6, 7, 12 (cf. omni cordis intentione (orare), Institutes, ii, 5, 12; also Collation i, 7; iv, 4; x, 8; xxiii, 11).

*in lacrimis, in compunctione lacrimarum:*

All 28, 29; 'compunction of tears' is from 28.

The other qualities of prayer are that it be Pure, Short, Frequent:

*pura*, 3, 15, 26 (Collations, ii, 22; iv, 2; x, 5).

*brevis sed frequens*, 36 (Institutes, ii, 10).

This cannot be accidental. The ninth Conference is the source whence St Benedict took his instructions on prayer, and is the authentic commentary on his teaching; so that in it we may securely read his mind.

The following is a condensation of the first half of Collation IX, in which, as before, Bishop Gibson's translation is freely used:

c. 2. The aim of every monk and the perfection of his heart tends to continual and unbroken perseverance in prayer—an immovable tranquillity of mind—lasting and continual calmness in prayer: for this are all the other exercises of the monastic life undertaken.

cc. 3-6. Purity of prayer is to be attained only by purity of heart and mind and life, and the one will be proportionate to the other.

cc. 8-14. In accordance with St Paul's text (1 Tim. ii, 1),[1] Isaac divides prayer into four kinds:

(1) Supplication, which is an imploring or petition concerning sins, whereby one who is sorry for present or past deeds asks for pardon.

[1] 'Obsecrationes, orationes, postulationes, gratiarum actiones.' Cassian explains 'orationes' as if the Greek word was εὐχή not προσευχή, and as being equivalent to 'votum.' There is no authority for εὐχή.

(2) Prayers or vows, whereby we offer or vow something to God; as when we promise God to contemn the world and adhere to Him, to avoid some vice or fault, to practise some virtue, or to serve Him faithfully.

(3) Intercession, whereby in fervour of spirit we pray for others, whether for those dear to us, or for the peace of the whole world.

(4) Thanksgiving which the mind in ineffable transports offers up to God when it recalls His past benefits, or contemplates His present ones, or looks forward to those which He has prepared for them that love Him. And with this intention also we are wont at times to utter richer prayers, while, as we gaze on the rewards of heaven, our spirit is stimulated to pour forth unspeakable thanks to God with boundless joy.

The next two chapters (15, 16) being fundamental for the understanding of Cassian's doctrine on prayer, the Latin is given in a footnote.[1] In the text the meaning is explained by

[1] c. xv. 'Ex quibus quattuor speciebus licet nonnumquam soleant occasiones supplicationum pinguium generari (nam et de obsecrationis specie quae de compunctione nascitur peccatorum, et de orationis statu quae de fiducia oblationum et consummatione votorum pro conscientiae profluit puritate, et de postulatione quae de caritatis ardore procedit, et de gratiarum actione quae beneficiorum Dei et magnitudinis ac pietatis eius consideratione generatur, ferventissimas saepissime novimus preces ignitasque prodire, ita ut constet omnes has quas praediximus species omnibus hominibus utiles ac necessarias inveniri, ut in uno eodemque viro nunc quidem obsecrationum, nunc autem orationum, nunc postulationum puras ac ferventissimas supplicationes variatus emittat affectus), tamen prima ad incipientes videtur peculiarius pertinere, qui adhuc vitiorum suorum aculeis ac memoria remordentur, secunda ad illos qui in profectu iam spiritali appetituque virtutum quadam mentis sublimitate consistunt, tertia ad eos qui perfectionem votorum suorum operibus adimplentes intercedere pro aliis quoque consideratione fragilitatis eorum et caritatis studio provocantur, quarta ad illos qui iam poenali conscientiae spina de cordibus vulsa securi iam munificentias Domini ac miserationes, quas vel in praeterito tribuit vel in praesenti largitur vel praeparat in futuro, mente purissima retractantes ad illam ignitam et quae ore hominum nec comprehendi nec exprimi potest orationem ferventissimo corde raptantur. Nonnumquam tamen mens, quae in illum verum puritatis proficit affectum atque in eo iam coeperit radicari, solet haec omnia simul pariterque concipiens atque in modum cuiusdam incomprehensibilis ac rapacissimae flammae cuncta pervolitans ineffabiles ad Deum preces purissimi vigoris effundere, quas ipse Spiritus interpellans gemitibus inenarrabilibus ignorantibus nobis emittit ad Deum, tanta scilicet illius horae momento concipiens et ineffabiliter in supplicatione profundens, quanta non dicam ore percurrere, sed ne ipsa quidem mente valeat alio tempore recordari. Et inde est, quod in qualibet mensura quis positus nonnumquam puras intentasque preces invenitur emittere, quia et de illo primo et humili ordine, qui est super recordatione futuri iudicii, is qui adhuc sub terroris est poena ac metu examinis constitutus ita ad horam compungitur, ut non minore spiritus alacritate de obsecrationis pinguedine repleatur, quam ille qui per puritatem cordis sui munificentias Dei

the help of a running commentary, the order being somewhat altered.

c. 15. Abbot Isaac lays down that these four kinds of prayer, speaking generally, correspond to successive grades in the spiritual life, supplication being most congenial to beginners and thanksgiving to the advanced. The later nomenclature, whereby the spiritual life is divided into the three stages of the Purgative, the Illuminative, and the Unitive ways, had not yet come into vogue in Cassian's time; but the idea underlying it may be clearly discerned in this passage. Cassian says: The first kind of prayer, supplication, seems to belong more especially to beginners, who are still troubled by the stings and recollection of their sins. This describes the purgative way. The next two kinds of prayer belong to those who have already attained some loftiness of mind in their spiritual progress and the quest of virtue, and who fulfil with works the perfection of their vows and desires, and so are stimulated by charity to intercede for others. This describes the illuminative way. The fourth, thanksgiving, belongs to those who have already torn from their hearts the tormenting thorn of conscience, and are able serenely and with pure mind to ponder on the beneficence of God and His mercy, and thus are carried away with fervent hearts to that glowing (or fiery, 'ignita,') prayer which cannot be grasped or expressed by the mouth of man. This is the unitive way.

Though these four kinds of prayer correspond ordinarily to different degrees of progress in the spiritual life, still one and the same man, according to his changing feelings and moods, will use now one and now another of them; so that they all are useful and needful for all monks. And while one is occupied in any one of them, he may be visited by a sudden enablement of the Holy Ghost whereby he will pour forth to God ineffable prayers of purest force. Although this prayer belongs rather to the next chapter, which deals with contemplation, as Cassian looks on it as something that may concern any one who seriously practises a life of prayer, we reproduce

perlustrans atque percurrens ineffabili gaudio laetitiaque resolvitur. Incipit enim secundum sententiam Domini plus diligere, quia sibimet ampliora cognoscit indulta.

c. XVI. 'Tamen expetendae sunt nobis per profectum vitae consummationemque virtutum illae potius supplicationum species, quae vel de contemplatione futurorum bonorum vel de caritatis ardore funduntur seu certe, ut humilius et secundum incipientium mensuram loquar, pro acquisitione quarumcumque virtutum seu vitii cuiuslibet exstinctione generantur. Aliter enim ad illa sublimiora quae praediximus supplicationum genera pervenire nullatenus poterimus, nisi per ordinem postulationum istarum sensim mens nostra fuerit gradatimque provecta' (Petschenig).

the description he gives of it in this place: 'Sometimes the mind which is advancing to that true state of purity and which is already beginning to be established in it (i.e. the unitive way) will pour forth to God ineffable prayers of purest force, which the Spirit Itself, intervening with groanings that cannot be uttered, while we ourselves understand not, offers to God, conceiving in the moment of that hour and ineffably pouring forth in its prayer things so great that they cannot be uttered by the mouth, or even at any other time be recollected by the mind' (Gibson). Though it is normally in the unitive way that such elevations occur, still in whatever measure one is placed, he may be found at times to give forth such 'pure and intent' prayers, even in the first and lowly station of the purgative way.

c. 16. Yet we ought by progress in virtue to aim at the prayer of thanksgiving, or at any rate at the two kinds of prayer belonging to the illuminative way. And we should try to pass systematically through these four phases of prayer, for we shall not attain to the sublimer kinds unless our mind has been little by little and by degrees raised through the regular course of these prayers.

c. 17. Jesus Christ by word and example taught these four kinds of prayer.

c. 18. There follows after these different kinds of prayer a 'still more sublime and exalted condition, which is brought about by the contemplation of God alone and by fervent love, by which the mind, transporting and flinging itself into love for Him, addresses God most familiarly as its own Father, with a piety of its own. And that we ought earnestly to seek after this condition, the Lord's Prayer teaches us saying, "Our Father"' (Gibson).

cc. 19-24. An exposition of the Lord's Prayer.

cc. 25 to end. On the highest kind of prayer and contemplation.

This last is reserved for the next chapter, as here there is question only of the ordinary course and states of prayer that any one who gives himself up seriously to the cultivation of an interior life of prayer may, and ought, with proper diligence to attain to. This is the subject-matter of the first eighteen chapters of this Conference, which we have just summarised.

We have in this place, I believe, the earliest attempt to analyse the progressive stages of prayer, and to formulate a science of prayer; and it is interesting to discern the germs of the elaborated doctrine of prayer taught by spiritual masters in later times, as by St John of the Cross and Fr Augustine Baker.

We begin with the prayer of the purgative way, inspired by the thought of sin, judgement, and punishment, and concerned with remorse, sorrow, and repentance. But as the conscience becomes purified we ought to advance soon to the prayer of the illuminative way, which is inspired by fervent love and confidence in God and love of our neighbour, and is concerned with the extinction of faults and the acquiring of virtues, and intercession for others. (In modern nomenclature, this corresponds to the 'Prayer of Affections and Acts.') By further progress in true purity of heart we should come to the prayer of the unitive way, which is inspired by such thoughts as God's greatness and goodness and love, and the joys of heaven, and leads to a richer and more interior prayer that is not expressed in words but is accompanied with ineffable joy and delight. (In modern nomenclature, 'Prayer of Aspirations.') This in turn leads on to a still more sublime state wherein the soul in transports of love contemplates God as its own Father. ('Acquired or Active Contemplation.') And during all these stages, principally the later, but also the first, there are likely to occur bursts of a yet higher and more spiritual kind of prayer, which is 'contemplation' in its fullest sense, the 'mystical experience' of later writers.

To return to St Benedict: it is to be noted that of this last highest kind of prayer Cassian uses the terms 'pure and intent,' both employed by St Benedict, when he says that prayer is to be 'pure,' and is to be offered with 'intentness of heart.' So that, as in the virtue of humility, so in the exercise of spiritual prayer, St Benedict proposes to his monks the greatest heights as the goal they are to aim at.

There can be no doubt that in these two Conferences of Abbot Isaac, IX and X, we have the primitive Benedictine Treatise on Prayer, used by our Holy Father and his disciples, the model on which Benedictines should shape their life of prayer.

What has been said suffices to bring out St Benedict's ideas as to the theory and practice of that 'oratio peculiaris' or private prayer which he intended to be an element in the daily life of his monks. But in regard to the public recitation of the divine office, which filled so large a place in his mind and Rule and in the life of his monasteries, it will be proper to

inquire what his wishes were as to the spirit in which this common prayer should be performed. His instruction on this point is contained in a single sentence: 'Let us so take part in the psalmody that our mind be in accord with our voice' (c. XIX). The natural meaning of these words is that we should pay attention to the actual sense of the words we are chanting or reciting and make our own the various succeeding prayers or sentiments of the psalms or hymns as they occur. But in view of the advice often given to facilitate the fixing of attention during the office, that we should at each canonical hour select some episode of our Lord's Life or Passion, and keep it before our minds, and try to meditate on it, rather than pay attention to the psalms, just as we try to meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary while saying the Hail Marys; or should try to keep our mind fixed on the mystery celebrated in the feast; it will be of use to go into this matter more carefully and try to determine with precision what was St Benedict's mind thereon.

St Benedict's sentence, just recited, is one of those derived from St Augustine's letter to his sister, afterwards called his 'Rule.' 'When you pray to God in psalms and hymns, let that be turned over in your heart which is uttered by your voice' (*Ep.* ccxi, 7). In further illustration may be cited St Basil and Cassian, the two writers whom St Benedict regarded above all as authorities on monastic theory and practice:

> St. Basil: 'Sing ye psalms wisely: if any one so directs his mind to the words of the psalms, in the same way as the taste is intent on distinguishing the flavour of various foods, he it is who fulfils this saying: Sing ye psalms wisely' (Rules, Rufinus' translation, 110).
>
> Cassian: 'Who is so alert and vigilant as never, while he is singing a psalm to God, to allow his mind to wander from the meaning of Scripture?' (Collation xxiii, 5). Again, as an instance of distraction in prayer: 'While the mind is chanting, it is thinking about something else besides what the text of the psalm itself contains' (Collation x, 13).

This shows that attention to the meaning of the psalms was the thing aimed at. And that this was the Benedictine tradi-

tion throughout the Benedictine centuries is shown by St Bernard, who says to his monks: 'I warn and entreat you . . . to occupy your thoughts while you are chanting with nothing else than the words which you are chanting. . . . I do not counsel you to carry with you when you go into the choir even those thoughts which you have derived from the books which you have been recently reading while sitting in the cloister. They are indeed to edification; but they do not edify you when you reflect upon them while you are chanting. For the Holy Spirit does not regard as acceptable that which you allow to obtrude at such an hour, which has no concern with your immediate duty, and occasions the neglect of a part of it.'[1]

From what has been adduced it appears how altogether conformable to Benedictine spirit is the advice as to the manner of celebrating the Opus Dei, which is given in the declarations of the English Congregation, in words of St Augustine: 'If the psalm prays, do ye pray; if it sighs, do ye sigh; if it rejoices, rejoice; if it hopes, hope; if it fears, fear.'[2] And it no less clearly appears that Fr Augustine Baker's advice, that generally speaking it is best during the office to try to keep the mind absorbed in God, reciting the words without attending to their meaning,[3] is not in accordance with the true Benedictine tradition, going back to St Benedict himself.

In like manner, all will probably agree that the most Benedictine method of assisting at mass is what Dom Morin calls 'the old and simple one,' that consists in following with our looks the actions, with our ears the words, with our voices the chant, and with our hearts the vital mystery that is hidden beneath all this;[4] just looking, listening, singing, communing, realising, making our own the sense of the Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration: Lord, it is good for us to be here.

Lastly, it is sometimes asked, which is the principal and best kind of prayer for Benedictines, the public prayer of the liturgy, or private interior prayer? The answer is simple: Each in its turn is best. Each kind of prayer answers to one of the two great instinctive tendencies of the human heart, the social and the individualistic. Man is a social animal, and

[1] *Serm. on Cant.* xlvii, 8.
[2] *Tract. in Psalm.* xxx (Sermo iii).
[3] *Sancta Sophia*, p. 347.
[4] *L'Idéal Monastique*, vi *fin.*

it is a fact that he does many things best in company. Enthusiasm is infectious in a crowd; in a crowd emotions are more easily and more powerfully excited. And so in every religion recourse is had to social worship of God and common prayer, with their accompaniments of music and singing and ritual, as helps to the evoking of religious feeling and action. And the Catholic Church, true to that instinct which makes her take men as God made them, and which has been one of her principal sources of strength through the ages, appeals to men's souls through their senses and through the contagion of numbers, and so has made her public worship of God a solemn and stately social act of her children; like the glimpse vouchsafed in the Apocalypse of the worship of God by the saints in heaven, where it is represented under the symbol of a grand act of solemn liturgical social worship.

But there is that other instinctive way in the worship of God, expressed by our Lord when He said: 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father Who is in secret' (Matt. vi, 6). This is that instinct that makes us seek God in our hearts and in our souls; introversion it is called, for the Kingdom of God is within us. This is the solitary communing of the soul with God, spirit with Spirit, in interior prayer; 'the flight of the alone to the Alone,' as Plotinus described it.

Both these kinds of prayer are scriptural; the Gospels show us Jesus Christ exercising both. Both are set before us by St Benedict in word and example. And Benedictine monks, like others, must do their best to travel along both these great roadways of the soul to God. Nor is there any antagonism between them: they will mutually help each other. The more we are penetrated with the spirit of the liturgy, the better able shall we be to reach to the heights of interior prayer; and the more sedulously we cultivate mental prayer the more spiritual and contemplative will our recitation of the office become.

For it must be remembered that contemplation is not attached to interior mental prayer only; its heights may be attained also, and often are, in vocal prayer, whether the office or some other. This is the teaching of Cassian: 'Who is able to give a sufficient account of the varieties of ways in which

the mind is inflamed and set on fire and incited to pure and most fervent prayers? Sometimes a verse of any one of the psalms gives us an occasion of glowing (ignita) prayer while we are singing. Sometimes the harmonious modulation of a brother's voice stirs up our astonied mind to intense supplication.'[1] This was the case with the Fathers of the Desert, who commonly used the Psalter for their private prayer.[2] St Teresa, the apostle of mental prayer, emphatically asserts 'it is quite possible, while you are reciting the "Our Father," or some other prayer, if you say it well, that God may raise you to perfect contemplation.' She says, moreover, that she knew a nun who 'enjoyed pure contemplation while saying the "Our Father."'[3] It is worthy of note how many of the principal writers on the inner life and spiritual prayer give commentaries on the Lord's Prayer, in the conviction that rightly used it will be the vehicle of the highest and most spiritual prayer. St Teresa herself, in the concluding portion of the *Way of Perfection* (cc. xxvii-xlii), takes the Lord's Prayer as the text whereon she bases her teaching on 'the Prayer of Quiet,' declaring that its use by a contemplative soul may raise it to the highest prayer. And before her, not to speak of Origen and Cyprian, Abbot Isaac in Cassian, as we have seen, inserts a commentary on it in his instruction on prayer, and says that it will lead the soul to the heights of prayer.[4] Among later writers Père Grou may be instanced, who similarly concludes his excellent treatise *How to Pray* with a long explanation of the Our Father, in the belief that it will lead

[1] *Coll.* ix, 26.

[2] Cassian again: 'Thriving on this pasture the monk will take in to himself all the thoughts of the psalms and will begin to sing them in such a way that he will utter them with the deepest emotion of heart, not as if they were the compositions of the Psalmist, but rather as if they were his own utterances and his very own prayer; and will certainly take them as aimed at himself, and will recognise that their words were not only fulfilled formerly by or in the person of the prophet, but that they are fulfilled and carried out daily in his own case. . . . While we sing the psalms we call to mind all that our carelessness has brought upon us, or our earnestness has secured, or Divine Providence has granted, or slippery and subtle forgetfulness has carried off, or human weakness has brought about, or thoughtless ignorance has cheated us of. . . . Thus affected from the very bottom of the heart we get at the full meaning of the psalm, not by reading the text, but by experience anticipating it. AND SO our mind will come to that incorruptible prayer, etc., as cited below, p. 79, i.e. perfect contemplation (*Coll.* x, 11).

[3] *Way of Perfection*, cc. xxv, 1; xxx, 7.

[4] *Coll.* ix, 18-24.

us to the perfection of prayer and of all else. Similarly Fr Baker, for all his predilection for interior solitary prayer, fully recognises that souls may be led to contemplation by vocal prayer alone: 'It cannot be denied that for those whom vocal prayer, accompanied by some exercise of virtue, is sufficient to bring to contemplation, no way is easier or more secure; none less injurious to head and health, or less exposed to delusions. And in time, in the case of a capable soul, the prayer becomes aspirative, mystic, and contemplative.'[1] In the MS treatise 'Vox clamantis' he writes: 'Vocal prayers and singing are the principal means intended by the Rule for the perfection of our souls and the perfect worship of God.'

Still, it cannot be gainsaid that in Fr Baker's estimation interior private prayer held the first place, and he undisguisedly proclaims its superiority over the public recitation of the office (*Sancta Sophia*, especially the chapters 'State of Introversion the End of Religion'; 'Vocal Prayer'; 'Internal Affective Prayer'). Here it may be profitable to suggest that Fr Baker and Abbot Guéranger, who in his excellent and suggestive General Preface to the *Liturgical Year* (Advent volume) seems equally to exalt the liturgical prayer of the Church to the depreciation of private personal prayer, are each of them reacting against opposite tendencies that had run to extremes at the times when they wrote. At the beginning of the seventeenth century there still was in vogue that prodigious multiplication, elaboration, and prolongation of church services which set in during the ninth and tenth centuries, so that the greater part of day and night was spent in choir by monks and canons, and the claims of mental prayer had been lost sight of, and were only beginning to be reasserted; St Teresa in the *Way of Perfection* assumes quite an apologetic tone in speaking of mental prayer, showing that there was widespread distrust and hostility towards mental prayer, as such, other than 'discoursive' meditation. On the other hand, in the middle of the nineteenth century the current had run the other way, to individualism and introspection, so that the methods and devotions of subjective piety held such sway that the celebration of the office was hardly recognised as personal prayer at all, and its solemnity was regarded as a

[1] *Life of Dame Gertrude More*, i, 58; cf. *Sancta Sophia*, p. 344.

hindrance to spiritual and contemplative prayer. Thus we may believe that each of these great monks, Fr Baker and Dom Guéranger, was right in asserting strongly, and with an inevitable over-emphasis, that aspect of prayer which in his time needed reassertion. And Benedictines will be well-advised if they take what is positive in both of them: for if we accept all that Fr Baker says of the value and power of internal prayer, and also, as easily we may, all that Dom Guéranger says of the value and power of liturgical prayer, then shall we secure for ourselves a well-balanced Benedictine life of prayer.

On the point of Benedictine theory, Benedictines must ever bear in mind St Benedict's words: 'Let nothing be placed before the Work of God.' They must never, even in order of thought, set anything else before the Opus Dei, as of greater spiritual value. Cardinal Gasquet speaks the language of the authentic Benedictine tradition when he says: 'St Benedict puts the divine office as the first and most important spiritual exercise for all who follow his Rule of life. The Opus Dei, God's Work, is to be placed as the first duty and to be preferred to all other religious practices.'[1] Yet in the next page he says: 'In regard to prayer, other than the Opus Dei, it is impossible to insist too strongly on the necessity of mental prayer for every religious. Upon this exercise in great measure depends our progress in the spiritual union of our souls with God. . . . It requires very little experience to prove to us that the intimate communion with God in mental prayer is almost essential to the proper raising of our minds to heavenly things during the times of our vocal prayer' (p. 89). Thus the Cardinal exhibits in his own person the paradox here counselled, that Benedictines should look on each kind of prayer as the more important. What it comes to is that both are necessary. As the Cardinal says, what Benedictines have to aim at is, by aid of mental prayer, to make the office a really spiritual interior contemplative prayer. This principle is forcibly and eloquently enunciated by Fr Leander Jones à S. Martino, who, after Dr Gifford became Archbishop of Rheims, stood out as the most distinguished and representative of the group of English Benedictines who

[1] *Religio Religiosi*, p. 88 (reprint, p. 86).

restored the old English Congregation at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In a 'Memorial' on a number of Fr Augustine Baker's ascetical treatises, added by Fr Cressy to *Sancta Sophia*, after saying that 'the spirit of our holy Rule consists principally in a spiritual union of our soul with God in affective prayer and exercise of the will immediately upon God' (p. 555), and that 'this affective prayer of the will' is 'the peculiar exercise belonging to our spirit and calling' (p. 560), he lays down that 'that prayer which is perfectly mental and vocal too is far more excellent than that which is mental only; as will be the exercise of the saints in heaven after the Day of Judgement, when in body and soul they shall praise and contemplate Almighty God. Whereupon it followeth, that although in this life our frail and weak body hindereth our soul, so that our prayer cannot be so perfectly mental and vocal as it shall be in heaven, yet must our mental prayer be so practised, that by the grace of God and loyal perseverance in union with Him, our vocal prayer in choir may be converted into mental; that is, that our vocal saying and singing may be so lively animated, as it were, and informed with affect of the soul, as if it were altogether spiritual prayer. And so shall we fulfil the words of our Rule: Let nothing be preferred before the office of the choir' (p. 556).

Monks who recite the office in this manner will come to experience the truth of those glowing words of Fr Baker's disciple, the English nun and mystic, Dame Gertrude More: 'The divine office is such an heavenly thing that in it we find whatsoever we can desire: for sometimes in it we address ourselves to Thee for help and pardon for our sins; and sometimes Thou speakest to us, so that it pierceth and woundeth with desire of Thee the very bottom of our souls; and sometimes Thou teachest a soul to understand more in it of the knowledge of Thee and of herself than ever could have been by all the teaching in the world showed to a soul in five hundred years; for Thy words are works.'[1]

[1] 'Confession,' 7; *Writings*, ii, 27.

# CHAPTER VII

## BENEDICTINE MYSTICISM

As it was necessary to preface chapter IV with some general remarks on 'Asceticism,' so is it necessary to preface this chapter with some remarks that will make clear the sense to be attached to that much misused word 'Mysticism.' The word 'mysticism' itself is quite modern: it is not in the Latin dictionaries (Du Cange or De-Vit's Forcellini), and the earliest instance of its use in English cited in the Oxford English Dictionary is from the middle of the eighteenth century. The adjective μυστικός, mysticus, 'relating to the mysteries,' is found in the classical authors, and was taken over and received into the recognised theological vocabulary of the Greek ecclesiastical writers. It was used also, but much more restrictedly, by the Latin ecclesiastical writers, usually for the 'mystic sense' of Holy Scripture, the spiritual or allegorical, as contrasted with the literal or historical sense.[1]

The modern use of the word 'mystical' has its origin in the title 'Mystical Theology,' given by pseudo-Dionysius to the little treatise that was the first formulation of a doctrine on the experience of the direct, secret, incommunicable knowledge of God received in contemplation. This word, 'contemplatio,' was the term used by Westerns to designate such experiences, and it held its ground throughout the Middle Ages, in spite of the fact that the pseudo-Dionysian writings had been translated into Latin in the ninth century; thus the great mystical treatise of Richard of St Victor is not called 'Theologia Mystica,' but 'De Gratia Contemplationis.'

The subject-matter of mysticism gives rise to many questions and problems of interest and of religious importance. I hope

[1] Another use, especially with Augustine, is 'mystic numbers.'

to deal with some of these in another book, now nearly ready.[1] It must suffice here to define the meaning in which the term is used in these pages. From the beginning 'mystic' has had two meanings, a good and a bad: a religious meaning connected with the attaining to God through the mysteries; and a meaning connected with the counterfeits of religion, and akin to magic. The latter is the meaning often, perhaps commonly, associated with the word 'mysticism' in these days; it is identified with occultism of all kinds, with spiritualism and hypnotic phenomena, with theosophy and 'Christian Science,' with weird psychical experiences, if only they have some kind of religious colour. All this is the degradation of mysticism, and is ruled out here.

In the passage reproduced at the beginning of chapter IV I said: 'Mysticism may broadly be described as the effort to give effect to the craving for a union of the soul with the Deity already in this life'; a craving which may well be called a common instinct of the religiously awakened soul. This same, the traditional Catholic conception of contemplation and mysticism, is adopted in the excellent introductory section of the article 'Mysticism' in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, where the writer, a well-informed and sympathetic nonconformist, accepts the old idea, but expresses it in the language of modern psychology—'the doctrine of the soul's possible union (i.e. in this life) with Absolute Reality, that is, with God.' This section will well repay study, as also will the singularly able and illuminating section on 'Roman Catholic Mysticism,' by Dom John Chapman (*ibid.*).

The Catholic, the Christian, conception of mysticism consists in the belief that already in this life it is possible for the soul to have an experimental perception of God's presence and being. This is the claim of the great Christian mystics from Augustine downwards, uttered with a conviction that begets conviction: 'My mind came to Absolute Being—That Which

[1] The title will be 'Western Mysticism': N.B. *not* 'Mysticism in the West,' which would be a much wider and more difficult subject. The character of the book is indicated by the sub-title: 'The Teaching of SS. Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life.' It is an attempt to present in their own words, by a series of extracts, a co-ordinated exposition, in scientific sequence, of the mystical teaching of these three great Western doctors and mystics. Part of what follows in this and the next chapter is a selection from the materials collected for this work.

Is—in the flash of a trembling glance.'[1] Such elevations have been called contemplation, union, and nowadays the 'mystic experience.' Those who have enjoyed this experience are unanimous in their appreciation of its unique religious value.

If mysticism be taken in this strictest sense, as the definite mystical experience of God, it is needless to say that no body of men can claim to be mystics: no religious order—not the Carmelites with the traditions of St Teresa and St John of the Cross upon them, not the Carthusians for all their seclusion and life of prayer—can make the general run of its members to be mystics. Not all the saints have been mystics. And so the title 'Benedictine Mysticism' is not to be taken as meaning that Benedictines ordinarily are, or can be, mystics such as this. But mysticism has a wider meaning: besides the experience of union with God, it may be applied to the whole process of spiritual growth which in special cases issues in this supreme experience. For many shape their spiritual life and exercisings on the supposition that such experiences are realities for which it is worth while striving to prepare ourselves, even though they never be attained to. For this reason I defined mysticism (above) not as the craving for union with God, but as 'the effort to give effect to' that craving. Thus the instinctive belief that such a consummation is possible does influence the lives of many, and induces them to enter on a course of self-discipline and prayer that undoubtedly does spiritualise and ennoble their lives, even though for the most part they do not reach the goal at which they aim. And these may in the broader sense be called mystics. Thus mysticism concerns wider circles than the inmost one of the few who achieve the actual mystical experience.[2]

It is the purpose of the following pages to bring out the mystical doctrine, or teaching on contemplation, which held sway in Benedictine circles during the Benedictine centuries.[3]

[1] 'Pervenit ad id quod est in ictu trepidantis aspectus' (Augustine, *Conf.* VII, xvii). Augustine stands out, for me, as the Prince of Mystics, both for the spiritual elevation of his experiences and for the power with which he describes them.

[2] See 'Conclusion' Cardinal Gasquet has added in reprint of *Religio Religiosi*.

[3] This term, 'Benedictine Centuries,' will often be used. It was Newman's original title (*Atlantis*, 1859) of the second article on the Benedictines, afterwards renamed by him 'The Benedictine Schools.' I do not know if he invented the term, but at any rate it has his authority. It applies to the six centuries between

This will be derived principally from the teaching of the two great Benedictine doctors and mystics, St Gregory the Great and St Bernard. But first a word must be said on St Benedict himself.

It is fitting that the first place in the line of Benedictine mystics should be held by our Holy Father. His claim to a place among the mystics, and in the innermost and most highly favoured circle of them, is based on the experience or mysterious vision of 'the whole world collected under a single sunbeam' (Dialogues, ii, 35), related by St Gregory and commented on by him in language so unusual and even startling that he has been understood, as by St Bernard, to mean nothing less than that St Benedict was momentarily raised to the manner of knowledge of the angels, who see God face to face, contemplate His Wisdom clearly in Itself, and know creatures in God.[1] To enter on this question would carry us too far afield, especially as it was a personal experience not illustrated by any words bequeathed us by our Holy Father. Indeed he has left no teaching of his own on the subject of contemplation; the word does not even occur in the Rule. So that if we desire to know his mind thereon and the ideas of his monks, we must once again have recourse to Cassian.

## CASSIAN

In the preceding chapter we saw the teaching of Cassian's ninth Conference, which along with the tenth was surely St Benedict's manual on prayer, in respect of the course of ordinary mental prayer suitable to be followed by all monks. In the second half, after an exposition of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, Abbot Isaac proceeds to speak of the higher grades of prayer, called contemplation, or (in recent times) mystical prayer.[2] He thus describes it:

This prayer (viz. the Our Father) then, though it seems to contain all the fulness of perfection, as being what was originated and

the middle of the sixth century and the middle of the twelfth, roughly from Gregory the Great to Bernard, Lanfranc, and Anselm, the last two being the harbingers of the new age. These centuries he calls 'Benedictine,' because during them the Benedictines were the chief religious, civilising, and educative influence in the Western Church.

[1] *Serm. de Diversis*, ix, 1. [2] *Coll.* ix, 25-36.

appointed by the Lord's own authority, yet lifts those to whom it belongs to a still higher condition, and carries them on by a loftier stage to that glowing (ignea) prayer which is known and tried by but few, and which to speak more truly is ineffable; which transcends all human thoughts and is articulate (distinguitur), I will not say by no sound of the voice, but by no movement of the tongue, or utterance of words; but which the mind, enlightened by the infusion of that heavenly light, describes in no human and confined language, but pours forth richly as from a copious fountain in an accumulation of thoughts, and ineffably utters to God, expressing in the shortest possible space of time such great things that the mind when it returns to its usual condition cannot easily utter or relate them (Collation ix, 25).

He describes the same prayer in other places too:

The mind will come to that incorruptible prayer which is not engaged in looking on any image, and is not articulate by the utterance of any voice or words; but with the intentness of the mind aglow, it is produced by an ineffable transport (excessus) of the heart, by some insatiable keenness of spirit; and the mind being placed beyond all senses and visible matter, pours it forth to God with groanings and sighs that cannot be uttered (Collation x, 11 *fin.*).

Another description of the same state of prayer has already been cited in the preceding chapter from ix, 15, and in 25, 26 Isaac refers back to it. It is, for our purpose, of especial significance that he explicitly in both places (15 and 26) applies to the prayer therein described the term 'pure prayer,' thus letting us see that this is the prayer intended by St Benedict to be aimed at by his monks as the goal of their life of prayer.

There is an apparent contradiction in Isaac's doctrine. In c. 25 he declares that such prayer 'is known and used but by very few' (see also x, 10); whereas in c. 15 his meaning is clearly that it is not infrequently attained to, on occasion, by those exercising any one of the grades of ordinary prayer, even 'the first and most lowly' grade of the purgative way. His meaning probably is that though such prayer was not attained to by all, or nearly all, of the monks of the Desert, still it is not out of reach of those who seriously take the means calculated to procure it, and any one progressing in the way of prayer is liable to receive such visitations of grace.

That this is the right interpretation is confirmed by the fact that he lays down, in general terms, that a spiritual and contemplative use of the Our Father, as explained in ix, 18-24, will lead those who assiduously use it to the higher and 'fiery' prayer of c. 25; and similarly, that the habitual use on all occasions of the ejaculation, 'O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me,' will bring the mind to such 'incorruption of prayer' (x, 11 *fin.*).

The later portions of the two Conferences (ix, 25-36; x, 4-13) are devoted to the nature and characteristics of this 'pure prayer,' and should be read in their entirety. Here a summary of the doctrine will be given, in elucidation of St Benedict's meaning.

The characteristic most emphasised by Isaac is the silence of this prayer: 'We pray with closed doors (Matt. vi, 6) when with closed lips and complete silence we pray to the Searcher not of words but of hearts' (ix, 35); this prayer 'is articulate (distinguitur) by no sound of voice or movement of tongue or utterance of words' (ix, 25; x, 11); it is 'ineffable and expressed by groanings unutterable' (ix, 15; x, 11), so that it cannot be remembered, nor any account given of it afterwards (ix, 15, 25). During it the mind is empty of all images and sense perceptions and memories of such: 'No image of the divinity, no memory of aught said, or appearance (species) of aught done, or form of any kind of impression (character) is admitted to the mind' (x, 5); such prayer 'is not engaged in looking on any image' (x, 11). By reducing its activity to the unceasing use of a single short ejaculation 'the mind casts out and represses the riches and ample matter of all thoughts, and restricts itself to the poverty of a single verse' (x, 11 *init.*). Such emptying and denuding of the mind and its faculties, as the immediate preparation for contemplation, is the common teaching of the mystics from St Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius and St Gregory onwards to St John of the Cross, who pursues the subject with his customary thoroughness in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel.*

Concerning the act of contemplation and what takes place in mind and soul during its exercise, Isaac does not attempt any definite account. The most nearly definite is the following: 'I feel that by the visitation of the Holy Ghost I have

gained direct purpose (directio) of soul, steadfastness of thought, keenness of heart, with ineffable joy and transport (excessus) of mind, and in the exuberance of spiritual feelings I have perceived by a sudden illumination from the Lord that there abounds in me a revelation of most sacred ideas previously altogether hidden from me' (x, 10). This is the subjective effect on the mind, and is wholly conformable to the experiences of the classical mystics. The object contemplated is indicated in a number of brief formulae:

Contemplation of God and spiritual intuitions (ix, 3).

Intuition of God alone (i, 8).

Enjoyment of divine intuition (xxiii, 5).

Contemplation of the highest Good (xxiii, 4); of divine things (i, 10).

To be fed on the beauty and knowledge of God alone (i, 8).

With quiet mind to look up to the glory of the divine Majesty (xxiii, 5).

To have foretaste of heavenly bliss (x, 7).

To cohere to God (i, 12); to inhere in Him (ii, 2); to be united to Him (ii, 2).

Such expressions, which might easily be multiplied, are of the kind found currently in all the great mystics.

It is worthy of note that in Abbot Isaac's two Conferences there is nothing that suggests any kind of bodily trance or alienation of the senses; the phenomena of ecstasy were, as might be expected in the Desert of Scete, known to Cassian, and are depicted in Collation xix, 4; but even there the ecstasy seems to be no more than a profound absorption of mind, without suggestion of the definite bodily phenomena of trance or rapture. Nor is there mention of visions or revelations or other such communications, or of any of the dubious psycho-physical concomitants that often accompany mystic states of prayer. Moreover, this 'pure prayer' is not sought of set purpose, or deliberately produced, as it often has been, especially in the East, by any semi-hypnotic condition or by absorption in introverted meditation; on the contrary, it is occasioned by causes the most trivial and casual: 'the harmonious modulation of a brother's voice'; 'the enunciation and reverence of the chanter'; 'the exhortation of a perfect man and a spiritual conference has often raised the

affections of those present to the richest prayer'; 'by the death of a brother or of some one dear to us we are often carried away'; above all, 'sometimes a verse of any one of the psalms gives us an occasion of glowing prayer while we are singing' (ix, 26). It is true that in this prayer words cease, and language fails, and sense impressions are transcended, so that, according to St Anthony's aphorism, 'that is not perfect prayer in which the monk is conscious of himself or that he is praying' (ix, 31); but the powers of mind and soul are operating and energising with a highly wrought activity, utterly removed from 'quietism.' In short, spiritual and wonderful as is this 'highest and richest' prayer, there is in it no element that should be called miraculous, no extraordinary divine action other than a copious inpouring of the grace of the Holy Spirit into the soul that has been made pure enough to receive it. This prayer is not an habitual state; it is a transitory exaltation occurring only now and then, and lasting only a short season. When the enablement is over the soul returns to its normal condition and to the ordinary course of prayer. It is not bestowed on all, even of the monks of the Desert; but it is open to all, even to beginners.

Such was Cassian's mysticism, such the teaching on prayer and contemplation which our Holy Father learned from him and gave to his monks, to lead them to 'the monk's end and the peak of all perfection, which consists in the consummation of prayer' (Collation ix, 7 *fin.*).[1]

## St Gregory the Great

The second great name in Benedictine history is St Gregory the Great.[2] His greatness in many other directions

[1] In another of St Benedict's authorities the term 'pura oratio' occurs, with a description of its nature. He refers more than once to the 'Vitae Patrum,' and among those known to him and used by him is Rufinus' translation of the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, which is Book II of Rosweyd's collection. Here, in the long discourse of John of Lycopolis (c. i), an account of 'pura oratio' is found, inferior indeed to Isaac's, but conformable to it (see Rosweyd, pp. 453-7, or Migne, P.L. xxi, 397-404). It begins with the same refrain as Isaac: 'The chief work of the monk is to offer pure prayer to God, having nothing blameworthy in his conscience' (Rosweyd, p. 453).

[2] There is no need in such a book as this for any apology for taking St Gregory as a Benedictine. Mr. Dudden's summing up of the case accurately represents the attitude of modern historical criticism: 'On the whole it seems

is fully recognised; but his position in the history of mysticism has been strangely overlooked. Yet he was himself a highly-gifted mystic, and he has written copiously on the subject, not in any set treatise of mystical theology, but by way of eloquent and convincing descriptions of his own personal experiences. Thus what he tells of contemplation is patently a record at first hand. The passages in question are found principally in the Book of Morals on Job, a series of conferences, addressed to the group of his monks of St Andrew's who accompanied him on his mission to Constantinople; and so they have a quite special interest for our purpose, in that they let us see the teaching given to his own Benedictine monks by the first and greatest of all Benedictine writers on the spiritual life and on contemplation and prayer. He continued to be the recognised master on these topics in the West during the early Middle Ages, and his teaching and his ideas were the dominant influence in the domain of mystical theology, contemplation, and spiritual life in Benedictine cloisters for five hundred years. As a summary of his doctrine on contemplation it will be best to reproduce his own account from one of the Homilies on Ezechiel:

There is in contemplation a great effort of the mind, when it raises itself up to heavenly things, when it fixes its attention on spiritual things, when it tries to pass over all that is outwardly seen, when it narrows itself that it may be enlarged. And sometimes indeed it prevails and soars above the resisting darkness of its blindness, so that it attains to somewhat of the unencompassed Light by stealth and scantily; but for all that, to itself straightway beaten back it returns, and out of that light into which panting it had passed, into the darkness of its blindness sighing it returns. [Jacob

probable that, though the Rule of Benedict may not as yet have been adopted in its entirety in St Andrew's monastery (i.e. the palace on the Coelian Hill, now S. Gregorio, which he turned into a monastery and in which he lived as a monk), still it formed the groundwork of Gregory's regulations, and its general spirit and leading principles were carefully conserved. . . . We shall probably not be far wrong if we imagine that the life of Gregory at St Andrew's was ordered for the most part in accordance with that Rule, "the marvellous discretion and lucidity" of which provoked at a later time his enthusiastic admiration' (*Gregory the Great*, i, 108). The same is the conclusion of Dr Grützmacher of Heidelberg in his *Die Bedeutung*, etc., to be referred to in chapter XI; and of Canon Hannay, *Christian Monasticism*, p. 230. It is true that in the most recent English work on St Gregory it is asserted that he never was a monk at all; but in face of his own frequent statements that he was, the assertion is preposterous and does not call for serious refutation.

and the Angel.] Such a soul, when it strives to contemplate God, as if placed in a wrestle, now comes uppermost, because by understanding and feeling it tastes somewhat of the unencompassed Light; and now falls underneath, because in the very tasting it faints away. Almighty God, when He is now known through desire and intellect, dries up in us every fleshly pleasure: and whereas aforetime we seemed to be both seeking God and cleaving to the world, after the perception of the sweetness of God, the love of the world grows feeble in us, and the love of God alone waxes strong; and while there increases in us the strength of inmost love, without doubt the strength of the flesh is weakened. The sweetness of contemplation is worthy of love exceedingly, for it carries away the soul above itself, it opens out things heavenly, and shows that things earthly are to be despised; it reveals things spiritual to the eyes of the mind, and hides things bodily.

But we must know that so long as we live in this mortal flesh no one so advances in power of contemplation as to fix the mind's eyes as yet on the unencompassed ray itself of Light. For the Almighty God is not yet seen in His brightness, but the soul beholds something beneath it, by the which refreshed it may progress and hereafter attain to the glory of the sight of Him. When the mind has made progress in contemplation it does not yet contemplate that which God is, but that which is under Him. But in that contemplation already the taste of interior quiet is experienced. And as it is, so to say, partial and cannot now be perfect, rightly is it written: 'There was silence in heaven about half an hour.' For heaven is the soul of the righteous. When therefore the quiet of contemplation takes place in the mind, there is silence in heaven; because the noise of earthly doings dies away from our thoughts, that the mind may fix its ear on the inward secret. But because this quiet of the mind cannot be perfect in this life, it is not said that there was silence in heaven a whole hour, but about half an hour: because as soon as the mind begins to raise itself, and to be inundated with the light of interior quiet, the turmoil of thoughts soon comes back, and it is thrown into disorder from itself, and being disordered it is blinded (Homilies on Ezechiel, II, ii, 12-14, compressed).

In this passage we have an ordered, and surely an eloquent and convincing exposition of St Gregory's theory of contemplation, manifestly based on his own experiences. It is possible to illustrate every element in it from the Morals and from other of the Homilies. St Gregory's conception of contemplation may be formulated thus: It is a struggle

wherein the mind disengages itself from the thought of the things of this world and fixes its attention wholly on spiritual things, and thereby raises itself above itself, and by dint of a great effort mounts up to a momentary perception of the unencompassed Light, as through a chink; and then exhausted by the effort and blinded by the vision of the Light, it sinks back wearied to its normal state, to recuperate its spiritual strength by exercising the works of the active life, till in due time it can again brace itself for the effort of another act of contemplation.

Only a few points call for special mention. The course of the spiritual life is thus laid down: 'Whoever has already subdued the insolencies of the flesh in himself, has this task left him, to discipline his mind by the exercises of holy working; and whosoever opens his mind in holy works, has over and above to extend it to the secret pursuits of inward contemplation.'[1] This order—mortification, the discipline of good works, contemplation—it will be noticed is the same as Cassian's two stages of the 'actual life,' leading up to the contemplative. It is well to point out in face of much current pseudo-mysticism, that for Gregory, as for all real mystics, a deliberately undertaken course of self-denial and self-discipline is the condition of contemplation. True mysticism cannot be divorced from a very thorough-going asceticism.

In one place he describes with precision the process whereby the mind sets itself to get under way in raising itself to contemplation. The preliminary condition is that it have been through a process of spiritual training, whereby it is able to empty itself of all images and sense perceptions: 'It must first have learned to shut out from its eyes all the phantasmata of earthly and heavenly images, and to spurn and tread underfoot whatever presents itself to its thoughts from sight or the other senses, so that it may seek itself interiorly as it is without these sensations.' Only when this power has by practice been acquired is the soul able to take the first step in contemplation, viz. 'Recollection': 'the first step is that the mind recollect itself—gather itself to itself.' The second step is 'Introversion': 'that it should see itself as it is when recollected'; should turn its eyes inwards upon itself, and consider

[1] *Mor.* vi, 56.

itself thus stript of sense perceptions and free from bodily images. In this way the soul 'makes of itself a ladder for itself,' and mounts to the third stage, 'Contemplation,' 'that it rise above itself, and make the effort to yield itself to the contemplation of the invisible Creator.'[1]

The following passage is the only one known to me in Gregory in which the act of contemplation is couched in terms that may seem to suggest some philosophy or metaphysical system, or a claim like Augustine's 'to come to That Which Is':

> The appearances (species) of corporeal figures the soul has drawn to itself within through the infirmity of the body. But to its utmost power it is on its guard that when it is seeking Truth (i.e. in contemplation) the imagination of circumscribed vision shall not delude it, and it spurns all images that present themselves to it. For since it has fallen by them beneath itself, it endeavours without them to rise above itself; and after it has been in unseemly manner scattered over the many, it strives to gather itself together to the One, that if it can prevail by the great force of love, it may contemplate the Being that is one and incorporeal.[2]

The reference to 'the many and the One' is due probably not to any neo-Platonism of Gregory's own, but to his acquaintance with Augustine, which was intimate.

In numerous places he speaks of the interior sweetness, delight, joy, and rest experienced in contemplation, and of the fervour and longing, and above all, the love it produces in the soul: 'When the mind tastes that inward sweetness, it is on fire with love.'[3]

This will suffice to give an adequate idea of St Gregory's mystical theology.

## St Bernard

St Bernard lived five and a half centuries after St Gregory; he died in 1153. He was a Cistercian and the principal figure in the Cistercian movement. The characteristics of the movement will be spoken of in a later chapter; but in the

[1] Homilies on Ezechiel, II, v, 8, 9: 'Primus gradus est ut se ad se colligat; secundus ut videat qualis est collecta; tertius ut super semet ipsam surgat ac se contemplationi Auctoris invisibilis intendendo subiciat.'

[2] *Mor.* xxiii, 42. [3] *Ibid.* v, 58.

matter of interior life, contemplation, mysticism, it did not differ from the older Black Benedictinism, so that on the range of subjects now engaging our attention St Bernard may be taken as a representative of Benedictine tradition. Like St Gregory, he wrote copiously on these subjects, but not by way of any set treatise on mystical theology. His teaching is to be found mainly in the Sermons on the Canticles, which form, like St Gregory's Morals, a series of familiar conferences addressed to his monks.

He insists on the necessity of asceticism—Cassian's 'actual life,' self-discipline and training in virtue—as the condition of any progress in contemplation. The first step in contemplation is 'Recollection,' whereby the mind 'gathers itself to itself,' banishing all sense perceptions and images of creatures, and detaches itself from human affairs that it may contemplate God.[1] It is by earnest and persevering prayer that contemplation is attained to; it is granted in response to a longing and importunate desire; and it should be desired by all who love God. All this is substantively the same teaching as that of St Gregory.

In more than one place St Bernard gives descriptions of the act or state of contemplation; pre-eminent among them is a long piece of much beauty and elevation, frankly autobiographical, wherein he essays to describe his own highest experiences of the mystic union. The strong personal element that runs through it makes it one of the most convincing, as it is one of the most eloquent, of the accounts of the mystical experience that we possess:

I confess, though I say it in my foolishness, that the Word has visited me, and even very often. But although He has frequently entered into my soul, I have never at any time been sensible of the precise moment of His coming. I have felt that He was present; I remember that He has been with me; I have sometimes been able even to have a presentiment that He would come; but never to feel His coming or His departure. For by what means He has made entrance or departure I know not. It is not by the eyes that He enters, for He is without form or colour that they can discern; nor by the ears, for His coming is without sound; nor is His presence capable of being traced by the touch, for it is intangible. You will ask

[1] *De Considerationе*, v, 2.

then how, since the ways of His access are thus incapable of being traced, I could know that He was present? But He is living and full of energy, and as soon as He has entered into me He has quickened my sleeping soul, has aroused and softened and goaded my heart, which was in a state of torpor and hard as a stone. He has begun to pluck up and destroy, to plant and to build, to water the dry places, to illuminate the gloomy spots, to throw open those which were shut close, to inflame with warmth those which were cold, as also to straighten its crooked paths and make its rough places plain, so that my soul might bless the Lord and all that is within me praise His Holy Name. Thus then the Bridegroom-Word, though He has several times entered into me, has never made His coming apparent to my sight, hearing, or touch. I could not tell by any of my senses that He had penetrated to the depths of my being. It was only by the revived activity of my heart that I was enabled to recognise His coming and to know the power of His sacred presence by the sudden departure of vices and the strong restraint put upon all carnal affections. His goodness and kindness have become known in the amendment of my life; while in the reformation and renewal of the spirit of my mind, that is, of my inward man, I have perceived in some degree the excellency of the divine beauty, and have been rapt in wonder and amazement at His greatness and majesty, as I meditated upon all these things.

But when the Word withdrew Himself, all these spiritual powers and faculties began to droop and languish, as if the fire had been withdrawn from a bubbling pot; and this is to me a sign of His departure. Then my soul is sad and depressed until He shall return and my heart grow warm within me, which indeed is the indication to me that He has come back again (Sermons on Canticles, lxxiv, 5-7, compressed: Eales' translation).

This contemplation St Bernard calls the 'contemplation of the heart'; he knew also a 'contemplation of the intellect': the one a rapture of devotion, the other a blaze of discernment. In the contemplation of the intellect 'at times something divine suddenly and with the swiftness of a flashing light shines on the mind': there is 'a sudden and unwonted enlarging of the mind, and an infusion of light enlightening the intellect,' so that pure truth is, at least in part, contemplated, this ray of brightness pouring itself not through open doors, but through narrow apertures. This mystic experience is an inpouring of the Spirit, a sweet inpouring of divine love, a wave of piety, a flash of glory, causing fervour and sweetness

and joy ineffable. Such experiences, even for the most highly-gifted souls, are rare and momentary.

Enough has been adduced to make it abundantly clear that St Bernard's teaching on contemplation and mysticism is substantively the same as St Gregory's.

## BENEDICTINE MYSTICISM

In our study of Benedictine mystical tradition we are fortunate in meeting, on the threshold of the Benedictine centuries, in St Gregory, a Benedictine saint and mystic, a Doctor of the Church, whose most original contribution to Christian thought and chief claim to rank among the Doctors is surely his teaching in mystical theology: and again, we are doubly fortunate in meeting, at the close of these centuries, in St Bernard, another Benedictine saint and mystic, also a Doctor of the Church, whose claim to rank among the Doctors is similarly due to his contribution to mystical theology. And when we find that these two Benedictine Doctors, at the beginning and the end of the five centuries characteristically Benedictine, teach a like doctrine of mystical theology; and furthermore, that their doctrine is wholly conformable to that of Cassian; we surely are justified in concluding that, if there be any such thing as 'Benedictine Mysticism,' we have it here. So it will be worth while to try to formulate the great features of their common doctrine.

St Bernard stood at the dividing line between two ages, the Patristic age that was closing, and the coming age identified with the Universities and Scholasticism, and the Mendicant Orders, and the Crusades.[1] He is sometimes spoken of as 'the last of the Fathers,' and intellectually he was the child of the age that was passing away. And so, like Gregory, he belonged to those centuries called the Early Middle Ages, in which philosophy little troubled men's minds: by Gregory's time the neo-Platonism that had been so vital an element in Augustine's intellectual life, and had so coloured his thoughts on mysticism, had died out; and not till just after Bernard's

[1] I am aware that Paris University already existed in St Bernard's time, and that he preached the second Crusade; this does not militate against the generalisation made in the text as to the chief characteristics of the Middle Ages proper, as contrasted with the Benedictine centuries.

time did the great wave of scholasticism envelop the intellectual life of all educated men. While Bernard's great contemporaries, Hugh and Richard of St Victor, were applying the new methods of scholasticism to a systematic presentation of a doctrine of mystical theology, in Bernard himself there is no more trace than in Gregory of any attempt to philosophise on the theory of contemplation. Moreover, though the writings of pseudo-Dionysius had been translated into Latin in the ninth century, I can see in St Bernard's words on contemplation and mystical theology no trace of any use or knowledge of these writings, nor do the indexes to his works give any reference to Dionysius. St Gregory in one place uses the 'Celestial Hierarchy' in illustration of a point he is making in regard to the angels; but in what he has written on mystical theology I cannot discern any trace of the influence of pseudo-Dionysius. Immediately after St Bernard, however, these writings came fully into vogue, and have strongly coloured the subsequent mysticism in the West no less than in the East. Thus a principal characteristic of the mysticism of St Gregory and St Bernard is that it is non-philosophical, being unaffected either by the neo-Platonism that preceded it, or the scholasticism that followed it, or by the special neo-Platonism of the pseudo-Dionysian writings. It is purely objective, empirical, being nothing else than the endeavour to describe first-hand experiences of the personal relations between the soul and God in contemplation and union.

Another feature characteristic of the two great Benedictine Doctors of mysticism is that in their accounts of the highest flights of the soul to God there seems to be no suggestion of those bodily phenomena of rapture and trance that figure so largely in the history of mysticism as frequent accompaniments of states of prayer, wherein the vital functions are temporarily suspended, and the body passes into a condition akin to hypnotism. A careful analysis of their language (instituted in the work on Western Mysticism) leads to the conclusion that in their own experiences they knew of no such psycho-physical accompaniments of their contemplations; and when they employ the terms 'ecstasy' and 'departure' (excessus), frequent with St Bernard and two or three times used by St Gregory, they speak only of such absorption in prayer that

they lost consciousness of themselves, of their bodies, and of all else than God. There is a similar complete absence of any suggestion of visions, revelations, locutions, auditions, divine communications or favours of any kind. This is all the more remarkable in regard to St Gregory's contemplations, in that his Dialogues abound in such visions and revelations. As to St Bernard, the description of his own mystical experiences, just cited at length, was spoken near the end of his life: in it he says quite definitely that never in his contemplations had he been aware of vision or locution or anything perceptible to the senses. In all this the mysticism of SS. Gregory and Bernard is in striking contrast to that of later times.

Another contrast lies in the entire absence of any mention of the devil. It is strange how the devil has invaded the realm of mystical theology and shares the ground about equally with Almighty God. In Görres' *Mystik* there are two volumes of 'Divine Mysticism' and two volumes of 'Diabolical Mysticism,' in large measure a systematised demonology, filthy and disgusting. Though the devil figures largely in the stories of the Dialogues, and is the object of much theological disquisition in St Gregory's other works, and also in St Bernard's, neither saint manifests any fear of his intrusion in the intimate personal relations of the soul with God.

It should be noticed that this mysticism of SS. Gregory and Bernard is in all its characteristic features in full accord with that of Abbot Isaac of Scete as recorded in Cassian's ninth Conference,—a strong confirmation of the claim that it is to be recognised as the primitive and authentic 'Benedictine Mysticism' of St Benedict and his monks, and of Benedictines in general during the Benedictine centuries. It is a mysticism purely spiritual, of a simplicity equal to its elevation. It is clean, being free from all taint of diabolism or any quasi-hypnotic symptoms; and safe for body, mind, and soul alike, being unaccompanied by those psycho-physical concomitants of trance, stigmatisation, visions, and revelations, so liable to illusion, and even at best so dubiously desirable, against which the greatest masters, as St John of the Cross, are always uttering warnings. It is to be noted that it is the firm teaching of St John that the highest mystical states and experiences are without such physical concomitants, being purely

spiritual operations on and in the soul, without any effect on body, senses, or imagination.[1] Benedictines, and all others, may be invited and encouraged to give themselves up, according to their powers, to the cultivation of this old and genuine Benedictine mysticism, because it is purely and solely religious, being nothing else than the effort of the soul to mount up to God in prayer, to seek union with Him, and surrender itself wholly to His love.

[1] Cf. *Dark Night*, II, i, 4; *Canticle*, xiii, 7.

# CHAPTER VIII

## BENEDICTINE LIFE CONTEMPLATIVE

### What this Means

THE question is often asked: Is Benedictine life contemplative? The answer to be given seems to be largely a matter of definition. As understood in modern times, a 'contemplative life' is one so given up to the pursuit of divine contemplation and the exercises that directly tend to it, that the exclusion of the works of the active life and of all that could be a distraction or hindrance to the one supreme object, has come to be regarded as a necessary condition of a contemplative life. Thus Teresian Carmelite nuns and Poor Clares and some Benedictine nuns would be recognised as leading a fully contemplative life; and among men in the Latin Church, Carthusians, Camaldolese, and Trappists. Judged by this standard the life of Black Benedictine monks in the present day, and for many centuries in the past, cannot be called contemplative. And whatever may have been the case in regard to St Benedict's own monastery, the history of the Institute as manifested in the lives of the Benedictine saints,—and that from the very earliest times, in the first generation after St Benedict himself, as seen among St Gregory's monks and disciples,—shows that the modern conception of the contemplative life was not in practice the accepted idea of Benedictine monks. Now it is an axiom that the spirit and ideals of an order are to be found most surely in the lives and actions of the saints it has produced. So any one considering the course of Benedictine history and its action on the world and the lives of the Benedictine saints, with the current notions in his mind as to the contemplative life, would be led to say that Benedictine life is not contemplative.

And yet there is a solid and continuous tradition that it is contemplative. St Thomas expresses the view of the Middle Ages when he says: 'The religion of monks—i.e. the monastic state—is instituted for the contemplative life'; [1] and St Thomas, it should be remembered, had a practical knowledge of Benedictine life, having been at school at Monte Cassino. The Benedictine tradition that their life is contemplative begins with St Gregory, and can be traced by a catena of utterances of representative Benedictines through the Middle Ages and down to modern times.[2]

Here, then, is a seeming contradiction in a matter of first importance touching the very theory of the life: not a mere modern contradiction, the result of latter-day abandonment of primitive ideas, but one which runs through the whole course of Benedictine history, and very definitely calls for elucidation. It will be found that the solution lies in the fact of the term 'contemplative life' having changed its connotation more than once in course of time, and having now come to be used in a much more restricted and absolute sense than in the Middle Ages.

In the beginnings of Christian monachism, among the monks of Egypt as represented by various hermits in Cassian,[3] we find the conception of the contemplative life pushed to the extreme limit. It could not be lived in a cenobium, but only in a hermitage: 'the cenobite cannot attain to the fulness of contemplative purity' (xix, 9); 'the heavenly transports' frequently experienced in solitude, and the 'sublimity of contemplation' are lost by return to the cenobium (5). Anything that withdraws the hermit from the precincts of his cell and courtyard, and compels him to go out for any work in the open air, 'dissipates his concentration of mind and all the keenness of the vision of his aim' (xxiv, 3). 'Agricultural work is incompatible with the contemplative life, because the multitude of thoughts generated by such work makes unbear-

[1] 'Monachorum religio est instituta ad vitam contemplativam' (2-2, clxxxviii, 2). These words occur in an 'objection'; but in the answer they are accepted, and the objection is met on the ground that not all religious orders are monastic.

[2] Such a catena I made many years ago, but unfortunately the notes are lost. I remember Rupert of Deutz (*d.* 1135), Trithemius (*d.* 1516), and Blosius (*d.* 1566) among the witnesses.

[3] Especially *Coll.* xix and xxiv.

able the prolonged silence and quiet of the hermit's cell' (4), and the excitement of cultivating a fertile garden is too great a distraction, and incapacitates the mind for spiritual exercises (12): of course it was recognised that contemplation cannot be continual in this life (xxiii, 5). It is at once evident that the three great cenobitic founders, Pachomius, Basil, and Benedict, all turned away from the idea of a contemplative life such as this,—literally turned away, because they all three began as hermits,—and all made agricultural work an integral part of the monastic life they instituted. Judged by Egyptian standards Trappist life is not contemplative, nor any form of Western monastic life, except, perhaps, the Camaldolese and Carthusian, who are half-hermits. They, however, in another respect fail to realise the Egyptian ideal, according to which the hermit had to earn his own livelihood by the work of his hands on some industry or handicraft carried on in his cell, as basket weaving, linen spinning, making copies of books. St Anthony is cited as passing somewhat unmeasured strictures on hermits who made provision to have their needs supplied, in order to give themselves up wholly to prayer and reading (Cassian, *Coll.* xxiv, 10-12).

The story of St Benedict's life, as told by St Gregory, affords indications that certain good works of the active life found place in his programme. He evangelised the country-side, still in great measure pagan, and converted the inhabitants of a neighbouring hamlet, and often sent his monks to give spiritual exhortations to a convent of nuns there (Dialogues, ii, 8, 19). There was also interest in and care for the temporal needs of the population round about in the frequent famines of those calamitous times (Dialogues, ii, 27, 28). And the boys received into the community, though they were monks, must have received some sort of education (*ibid.* 3; *Regula, passim*).[1]

Thus it is clear that Benedictine life as constituted by St Benedict was not contemplative according to Egyptian ideas. And it has to be recognised that not only agricultural work, but intellectual work as well, including the study of speculative theology, and also ritualistic elaboration and

[1] We have seen that all this side of the life was even more emphasised by St Basil than by St Benedict.

grandeur of church services, are all opposed to a contemplative life such as this. The Eastern mind as ordinarily constituted even to this day, be it Buddhist, Brahmin, or Mahomedan, is capable of a contemplative concentration rarely met with among Westerns.

In the foregoing chapter we found that St Gregory first formulated the Benedictine idea of contemplation; and similarly he it was who formulated the Benedictine theory of the contemplative life. He has written very fully and in many places on the Two Lives, the active and the contemplative, and the relations between them, and the conciliation of their claims on the individual. His teaching is almost wholly based on that of St Augustine, but it has a Roman actuality and practicality that gives it a character of its own; and so St Thomas takes him as the principal authority on the subject, as indeed he was throughout the Middle Ages. St Gregory gives what I believe is the first full definition or description of the two lives:

> There are two lives in which Almighty God by His holy word instructs us, the active and the contemplative.
>
> The active life is: to give bread to the hungry, to teach the ignorant the word of wisdom, to correct the erring, to recall to the path of humility our neighbour when he waxes proud, to tend the sick, to dispense to all what they need, and to provide those entrusted to us with subsistence. But the contemplative life is: to retain indeed with all one's mind the love of God and neighbour, but to rest from exterior action, and cleave only to the desire of the Maker, that the mind may now take no pleasure in doing anything, but having spurned all cares, may be aglow to see the face of its Creator; so that it already knows how to bear with sorrow the burden of the corruptible flesh, and with all its desires to seek to join the hymn-singing choirs of angels, to mingle with the heavenly citizens, and to rejoice at its everlasting incorruption in the sight of God (Homilies on Ezechiel, II, ii, 7, 8).

The following summary of St Gregory's doctrine on the two lives is brought together from various places of his writings, but the substance of it all is to be found in the Morals.[1]

The active life is by necessity, the contemplative by choice, because one may enter the heavenly kingdom without having

[1] See *Ezech.* I, iii, 9, 10; II, ii, 8, 9, 10: *Mor.* vi, 60, 61; xxx, 53; xxxi, 102.

exercised the contemplative life, but no one can enter it without having exercised the good works of the active life. The active life can be laid hold of in its fulness in this world, and ends with it; but only the beginning of the contemplative life can be tasted here, to be perfected in the other world. The active life is more productive than the contemplative, but the latter is of greater merit and better. The active life comes first, and only after it has been duly practised is one able to enter on the contemplative, and at all times it is necessary to return frequently from the contemplative to the active life.

Cassian recognised that the act of contemplation cannot be continual in this life; St Gregory goes further and holds that a contemplative life, such as that aimed at by Cassian's hermits, cannot in practice be continual, and that the most that is possible is an alternation of the two lives. This idea is dwelt on in various places; among others the following:

> We can remain fixed in the active life, but in the contemplative we are by no means able to keep our mind on the stretch. . . . When we mount from the active life to the contemplative, as the mind is not able to stand long in contemplation,—but whatever it gazes on of eternity, in a mirror and an enigma, it beholds so to say by stealth and in passing,—repelled by the immensity of so great a height, it sinks back into itself. And it has to return to the active life and to exercise itself for long in the practice of good works; so that when the mind is not able to rise to the contemplation of heavenly things, it may not refuse to do the good that it can. And so it comes about that helped by its good deeds it again mounts aloft unto contemplation, and receives nourishment of love from the pasture of contemplated Truth. And as the very weakness of corruption cannot for long maintain itself in contemplation, coming back again to good works, it feeds on the memory of the sweetness of God, and is nourished externally by good actions and internally by holy desires (Homilies on Ezechiel, I, v, 12; cf. Morals, x, 31, cited below).

When St Gregory is in an allegorising vein, everything comes as grist to his mill; the locust in Job xxxix, 20, occasions the following exegesis:

> Holy men, when they aim at heavenly things, rely in the first place on good works of the active life, and afterwards raise themselves in flight to sublime truths by the spring of contemplation.

But while dwelling in this life they cannot remain long in divine contemplation, but after the sublimities of contemplations they return to the necessary doings of the active life; but yet they are not content to remain in the active life, and when they eagerly spring forth to contemplation they again, as it were, seek the air in flight: they pass their life like locusts, soaring up and sinking down, while they ever unceasingly endeavour to behold the highest objects, and are thrown back on themselves by the weight of their corruptible nature (Morals, xxxi, 49).

Such an union of the two lives is taught by the example of Jesus Christ:

Christ set forth in Himself patterns of both lives, that is the active and the contemplative, united together. For the contemplative differs very much from the active. But our Redeemer by coming Incarnate, while He gave a pattern of both, united both in Himself. For when He wrought miracles in the city, and yet continued all night in prayer on the mountain, He gave His faithful ones an example not to neglect, through love of contemplation, the care of their neighbours; nor again to abandon contemplative pursuits, from being too immoderately engaged in the care of their neighbours: but so to combine these things, by applying their mind to both, that the love of their neighbour may not interfere with the love of God; nor again the love of God cast out, because it transcends, the love of their neighbour (Morals, xxviii, 33).

Enough has been adduced to show that for St Gregory the two lives are not lived each apart by two sets of men. They are to be combined in the life of each one. The active life alone is unsatisfying for the spiritually minded:[1] the contemplative life alone is impracticable for any one (see above). The following passage gives his idea of the contemplative life as actually lived:

When the minds of the elect, through the grace of an active life being vouchsafed them, abandon the paths of error, they never return to the evil courses of the world which they have forsaken; but when through the gaze of contemplation they are led to stay themselves from this same active life, they 'go and return,' in that because they are never able to continue for long in contemplation, they again let themselves out in action, that by busying themselves in such things as are immediately near them they may recruit their strength, and may

[1] *Mor.* vi, 55.

be enabled by contemplation again to soar above themselves. But while this practice of contemplation is in due method resumed at intervals of time, we hold on assuredly without failing to all its entireness (soliditas); for though the mind being overcome by the weight of its infirmity falls short, yet being restored again by continual efforts it lays hold thereof. Nor should it be said to have lost its stability in that which, though it be ever failing in, it is ever pursuing, even when it has lost the same (Morals, x, 31).[1]

This passage is of an interest quite unique. In it we have the definition of a contemplative life given by one who, next to St Benedict, is himself the most commanding figure in Benedictine history, and one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life that the Western Church has produced. Moreover, he is speaking here as a Benedictine abbot to his monks in intimate conference. We have seen that St Benedict turned away from the presentation of the contemplative life given by his favourite Cassian; and here St Gregory formulates a theory of contemplative life conformable to St Benedict's action. To me this utterance appears to come next in importance to the Holy Rule itself as the authentic primitive Benedictine legislation on what is probably the most vital point of Benedictine theory; yet I do not know that it has been brought to bear on the elucidation of the question: What is Benedictine contemplative life? But it is of decisive value in determining St Gregory's mind, and as such it is worthy of our careful study.

It is seen, then, that a contemplative life as understood by Cassian's hermits, and also in later times,—one from which the works of the active life are excluded almost wholly, or reduced to the smallest possible measure,—did not fall within St Gregory's mental horizon at all. His only conception of a contemplative life is one in which active good works hold a considerable, and even, in point of time, a predominant place; but in which for all that, the effort to exercise also the works of the contemplative life is kept habitually in operation. It

[1] The original of the latter portion is as follows: 'Sed dum haec eadem contemplatio more debito per temporum intervalla repetitur, indeficienter procul dubio et in eius soliditate persistitur: quia etsi infirmitatis suae pondere superata mens deficit; haec tamen iterum continuis conatibus reparata comprehendit. Nec stabilitatem suam in ea perdidisse dicenda est, a qua etsi semper deficit, hanc et cum perdiderit semper inquirit.'

is, in short, a 'mixed life,' wherein each of the two lives is really and fully lived, thus according with St Thomas' definition to be cited just now.[1] And so a Benedictine monk, if he is to be a contemplative after St Gregory's idea, while he carries out his allotted works of the active life, must keep alive an unflagging love and desire of the contemplative life and its works, and must at steadily recurring intervals make the effort to give himself up to contemplation: and, so doing, he has St Gregory's assurance that he holds on to the contemplative life in its entireness, without infidelity or instability. St Gregory did not look on contemplation as a nearly superhuman thing, one of the rarest of graces. On the contrary, he believed it to be within the reach of all men of good will who give themselves seriously to prayer and keep due guard upon their hearts: 'It is not the case that the grace of contemplation is given to the highest and not given to the lowest; but often the highest, and often the most lowly, and very often those who have renounced (remoti), and sometimes also those who are married, receive it. If therefore there is no state of life of the faithful from which the grace of contemplation can be excluded, any one who keeps his heart within him (cor intus habet) may also be illumined by this light of contemplation (Homilies on Ezechiel, II, v, 19).

He urges in many places of the *Regula Pastoralis* that all pastors who in any capacity exercise the cure of souls, must cultivate contemplation as the condition of a fruitful ministry (ii, 5). And if contemplation be possible, and should be usual, for bishops and priests exercising the pastoral office, much more is it within reach of monks, whose life, by removing the principal obstacles, facilitates contemplation. Some good measure of tranquillity is the essential condition of contemplation. Gregory in one place complains that the cares of the papacy are so engrossing that even when he endeavours to recollect himself for prayer, he is unable to drive out the tumultuous thoughts that hinder his contemplation (*Ep.* i, 5); and the burden of his oft-quoted lament on having been drawn forth from his monastery is the loss of the oppor-

[1] St Augustine speaks of the 'mixed life' under the term 'ex utroque genere temperatum *vel* compositum' (*de Civitate Dei*, XIX, ii, 1; xix, 1); St Gregory, I think, does not.

tunities for contemplation that were afforded so abundantly by the monastic life.[1] It is clear that the idea primarily associated in his mind with monastic life was the exercise of contemplation.

Before passing on to St Bernard we should note that the earliest commentator on the Rule, Paul Warnefrid, towards the end of the eighth century, in the Exposition of c. XLVIII, definitely applies to Benedictine life St Gregory's teaching:

> At fixed times the brothers should be occupied in manual work, and again at fixed times in holy reading. Because Blessed Benedict knew that these two lives, the active and the contemplative, are necessary for every perfect man, therefore he divided them by times. And he properly first named the active life, and afterwards the contemplative; by the exercise of work he designated the active life, and by the leisure of reading the contemplative. The two wives of Jacob, Lia and Rachel, designate these two lives, Lia, dim-eyed and seeing less, but fertile, the active; Rachel, beautiful and seeing more, but sterile, the contemplative. By Jacob is understood the good monk who must be united to both lives. The contemplative is reading and prayer, the active is manual work. As Jacob desired to have Rachel first, and did not receive her, but Lia, and then Rachel; so a good man cannot come first to contemplation, unless he have been exercised in the active life; but he rightly will come to contemplation, who has first rightly lived in the active life. And that monk who has carefully and well carried out his manual work, when he comes to his reading will receive either contemplation or tears: but by no means will he be able to give himself up studiously to reading unless he have properly performed his manual work.

The allegory of Lia and Rachel as figuring the two lives is here taken from St Gregory,[2] who in turn took it from St Augustine;[3] it became a commonplace in medieval times.[4]

We should expect St Bernard, speaking to the primitive Cistercians, to present a severe view of the contemplative life, akin to that of the Egyptian monks in Cassian; but we find him following closely, and point by point, St Gregory's doctrine on the relations between the two lives as set forth above. Only three or four extracts from the Sermons on the Canticles will be given, bringing out clearly his agreement with St

[1] *Dial.* Pref.
[2] *Hom. in Exech.* II, ii, 10; *Mor.* vi, 51.
[3] *Contra Faustum*, xxii, 54, 55.
[4] Bede, Bernard, etc.

Gregory on the practical aspect of Benedictine life in the matter of conciliating contemplation and active work:

A soul accustomed to quiet draws consolation from good works whenever the light of holy contemplation is withdrawn from it, as is often the case. For who is able to enjoy the light of holy contemplation, I do not say continually, but even for a considerable time, while in this body? But as often as he falls from the state of contemplation he resorts to that of action, as to a convenient refuge from whence he may be able more easily to return into his former state (Sermons on Canticles, li, 2).

Of contemplation: Sweet is that communion; but how seldom does it occur, and for how brief a time does it last (lxxxv, 13).

Recognise what I have said to you [viz. the Cistercians of Clairvaux] more than once about the two alternations of sacred repose and of necessary action, and that there is not in this life space for lengthened contemplation or prolonged repose, because the duties of office and the usefulness of work press upon us more urgently and are more immediately necessary (lviii, 1).

We are taught that it is often needful to leave spiritual contemplation, however sweet, for the sake of the practical labours which give nourishment, and that no one must live for himself alone, but for the good of all (xli, 6).

It is a property of true and pure contemplation that it sometimes fills the mind with a fervent zeal and desire to gain for God the souls of others, and to that end it very willingly lays aside the calm and rest of meditation for the labour of preaching; and again when it has attained the object desired, it returns with increased eagerness to that contemplation, which it remembers that it laid aside for the purpose of gaining more fruit. Then, when it has tasted again the delights of contemplation, it recurs with increased power, and with its accustomed willingness, to its labours for the good of souls (lvii, 9).

It is frankly recognised that the works of the active life will occupy the greater portion of time:

There is no doubt that in a right-thinking soul the love of God is preferred to the love of man, heaven to earth, eternity to time, the soul to the body. And yet in well-regulated action the opposite order is found frequently, or almost always, to prevail. For we are both more frequently occupied, and more busily, with cares for the temporal good of our neighbour; we apply ourselves, by the right of humanity and the necessity of the case, more to promote the peace of the earth than the glory of heaven; in our anxiety about temporal

interests we scarcely permit ourselves to think anything about those which are eternal (l, 5).

Enough has been cited to show that St Bernard's teaching to his Cistercian monks at the middle of the twelfth century, on the nature of a contemplative life as actually to be lived, was identical with St Gregory's to his Benedictine monks at the end of the sixth. Here again, the teaching of St Gregory, the friend of St Benedict's personal disciples, confirmed as it is by St Bernard at the other end of the Benedictine centuries, must be taken as the authentic Benedictine tradition as to the character of Benedictine life. It will, however, be of interest to confirm it yet further by an illustration from later times; and all the more so in that this supplies a working theory whereby Benedictines may conciliate the two sides of their life.

It was five centuries from St Gregory to St Bernard, and another five hundred years brings us to modern times, to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when some English monks were endeavouring to resuscitate the all but extinct remnant of the old Benedictinism of England, and to reconstitute an English congregation. The leaders in the movement were a distinguished group of men, learned and devoted, eager for the perils of the English Mission, good monks trained in the traditions and reformed observance of the Benedictine monasteries of Italy and Spain. They had just made three or four foundations in Flanders and France, and the manner of life they were establishing in these houses was not only one of strict observance but also of manifold activities. Thus at St Gregory's at Douay, by the conditions of the foundation the monks were bound to prosecute seriously sacred studies, and to provide professors of theology, philosophy, and humanities for the Vedastine College established in Douay University by their founder, Philip Caverel, abbot of St Vedast's, Arras; and in fact they did hold many chairs in the colleges of the University, and even in the University itself. Besides this, they had a school for lay boys, one of the principal over-sea schools frequented by the English Catholics. And so it was at the other houses of the English monks: for instance, at that of St Malo, to use Weldon's quaint phrase, they 'sweated in the confessionals and pulpits of the town.'[1] And behind all these

[1] *Chronological Notes*, 81.

activities in the monasteries, the ultimate destiny was hanging over each one of them of facing the labours, anxieties, alarms, escapes, pursuits, perhaps captures, inherent in the English Mission in the time of persecution. These elements are insisted on that there may be no mistake as to the active side of the life of the congregation. And yet we find that these monks, the founders of the restored English Congregation, in the body of constitutions they drew up (1621), asserted unequivocally the great traditional principle that the monks of the congregation are called upon to be individually 'true contemplatives'; for the purpose of the yearly retreat is declared to be that 'thus they may learn to be themselves truly spiritual men and contemplatives, and then may be able to instruct and guide others in the same exercises.' This sentence was omitted in later revisions of the constitutions, but was reinstated in that of 1900 (Decl. 19), and received the approbation of the Holy See; so that it is now for the monks of the English Congregation, and indirectly for all Benedictines, an authoritative reminder that, be their active works what they may, they must see to it that their personal life is contemplative.

More than this: there was in that group of English monks a contemplative in the fullest and highest sense of the word, a rare mystic, Fr Augustine Baker. He was a prolific writer over the entire range of mystical theology. More than forty of his manuscript treatises were 'methodically digested' by Fr Serenus Cressy, in the book *Sancta Sophia*.[1] It has to be understood that *Sancta Sophia* was no private venture. It was undertaken and issued by the highest authority of the congregation, its publication, after most careful examination, being ordered by an unanimous vote at two general chapters, 1653 and 1657. Dom B. Weld Blundell has collected the facts in the preface to his modernised abridgement, and they fully justify his conclusion: '*Sancta Sophia* appears to be set forth by the restorers of the congregation as the deliberate, permanent, official expression of the spirit of the congregation over which they ruled.'[2] It is true that Fr Baker's treatises

[1] Printed at Douay 1657; republished, London 1876, and since, the title being changed to *Holy Wisdom*.

[2] *Contemplative Prayer*, 1907, pp. v-ix.

were composed primarily for the English Benedictine dames at Cambrai. But the fact that *Sancta Sophia* contains a chapter on 'The Apostolical Mission into England' shows that the book was intended by general chapter for the monks as well as the nuns. Thus it has a higher authority than that of Fr Baker or Fr Cressy, and the theory it propounds on the nature of Benedictine vocation and life can claim the sanction of the superiors of the congregation as being true for the monks, whatever may have been, or be, their occupations and activities. Fr Baker's consistent and unequivocal teaching, alike in the treatises and in *Sancta Sophia*, is that the Benedictine vocation is contemplative. For instance, he says: 'A religious profession according to the Rule of St Benedict or St Bruno is the most proper school of contemplation.'[1] But when he comes to definitions he reverts to the older teaching of St Gregory, recognising only the active and contemplative lives, and ignoring the mixed as a formal third kind of life, but emphasising the fact that in practice nearly all souls are 'mixed.' After laying down that all dispositions may be divided into active and contemplative, he explains: 'Though all internal dispositions of souls may conveniently enough be ranged under these two states, yet we are not to conceive that each soul is by its temper entirely and absolutely either contemplative or active; for, on the contrary, the most part are of a disposition mixed between both, and partaking somewhat, more or less, of each. But they receive the denomination from that whereto the propension is more strong. . . . Now that wherein diversity of spirits is principally discerned is their prayer.'[2] And he goes on to describe the prayer of the contemplative life as a 'quiet, affective prayer of the heart alone,' and that of the active life as the 'busy methods of discoursive meditation.' In one of the MS treatises, entitled 'Varieties of Spirits in Religion,'[3] Fr Baker distinguishes contemplatives into two categories, 'pure contemplatives' and 'imperfect contemplatives,' the latter being such as perform their ordinary duties and spend the greater part of their time in a state of distraction; but yet, when they apply themselves

[1] *Sancta Sophia*, p. 145; and see pp. 154-60.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 37.
[3] In a volume of 'Remains,' brought together by Fr Baker himself.

to prayer, are able to recollect themselves and exercise contemplative prayer of the will. He further characterises them thus: 'The imperfect contemplative spirit is one who commonly in his business is full of multiplicity. However, when the businesses are laid aside, and he betakes himself to his recollection at the season for it, he, having as it were a natural and habitual propensity towards God and His immediate presence, with a loathing, or at least a neglect or disesteem of all creatures, doth easily surmount all multiplicity of images that could be occasioned by his precedent employments whereon the soul had never fixed her love; for she was not, nor could be, satisfied or much delighted with them; and therefore he easily getteth an unity and simplicity of soul, and overcoming multiplicity, which is distraction, he easily findeth and treateth with the unity and simplicity of God, which immediately appeareth unto him.' That which is common to contemplatives, both perfect and imperfect, is that 'they immediately and without the mean of images or creatures, apply themselves to God, or to seek union with Him by the powers of their soul, especially by the most noble power of it, called the will.' Contemplatives of both grades, perfect and imperfect, he classes together as 'souls of the first rank,' and he pronounces the imperfect contemplatives to be very suitable for a monastic life; nay, he would not exclude even 'good active spirits,' with no aptitude for contemplative prayer: such 'may be well and gladly admitted in regard they will be of some good use, and will not be troublesome, but will much content and satisfy themselves with external labours and solicitudes'; but in *Sancta Sophia* there is a warning that too many such be not received (p. 180). Now 'pure contemplatives' being the rarest of all vocations, and seldom to be met with in any order—St Teresa says more than once that by no means all her nuns enjoyed contemplation[1]—it follows that, if the generality of Benedictines are to be contemplatives, it must needs be of Fr Baker's 'imperfect' sort.

And so this very sane teaching of Fr Baker affords the material for a practical definition of a contemplative life that seems to meet the facts of the case. It may be said that a contemplative life, in the traditional Benedictine sense, is one

[1] *Way of Perfection*, cc. xvii, xviii.

wherein contemplative prayer is practised in an adequate measure. This gives rise to two questions:

(1) What is contemplative prayer?

(2) What amount of it is necessary in order to make a life contemplative?

Fr Baker gives a perfectly clear answer to these questions:

(1) 'A soul that by a divine call, as being in a state of maturity for it, relinquisheth meditation to the end to betake herself to a more sublime exercise, which is that of immediate acts or affections of the will, only then begins to enter into the ways of contemplation; for the exercises of the will are the sublimest that any soul can practise, and all the difference that hereafter follows is only in regard of the greater or lesser promptitude, or in regard of the degrees of purity wherewith a soul produces such acts. The whole latitude of internal prayer of the will, WHICH IS CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER, may be comprehended under these two distinct exercises (1) forced acts or affections of the will; (2) aspirations.'[1] Thus when a soul quits discoursive meditation and ceases from the operations of the imagination and reasoning in its prayer, so that the prayer becomes wholly the working of the affections and acts of the will,—all which may, and very frequently does, arrive in a short time after the beginning of a spiritual course,—it has then entered on the way of contemplation, and is exercising contemplative prayer, the beginnings of it only, still really and truly the thing itself. That this is contemplative prayer is not an idea of Fr Baker's; it has behind it a great body of early Catholic tradition. It is taught by St Teresa, and very explicitly by St John of the Cross, who says that when meditation ceases contemplation begins, and describes it as 'being purely, simply, lovingly intent on God.'[2] This 'prayer of simple regard,' or 'prayer of simplicity,' has recently been well dealt with by Père Poulain, S.J., in the second chapter of his book on *The Graces of Prayer*. This chapter has been printed separately, from the English translation, as a Catholic Truth Society tract, edited by the present writer, and it may well be referred to as admirably illustrating the older traditional doctrine. This 'prayer of simplicity,' as he says, is usually called 'ordinary or acquired contemplation,'

[1] *Sancta Sophia*, p. 431. [2] See Appendix following this chapter.

to distinguish it from higher and more truly mystical kinds of prayer. Prayer of this kind is a very simple and natural thing; it comes easily to innumerable souls that know nothing of the divisions and names of interior prayer. Moments or short periods of such prayer are experienced by most religiously awakened souls; but unless it be sustained for some notable time it could hardly be called 'contemplative prayer.' By dint of practice, however, and self-discipline in praying, it will become more and more easily sustained, and more and more profound and pure. It is precisely the kind of prayer recommended by St Benedict (see chapter VI); so that the prayer of the Rule *is* contemplative prayer: 'contemplative and aspirative' is Bishop Ullathorne's characterisation of it.[1]

(2) To the second question: What amount of such contemplative prayer is requisite in order to make a monk's life contemplative? Fr Baker's answer is equally explicit. It is found in another of his unprinted treatises, *The Alphabet:* 'It will suffice the soul as to vocal prayers that she perform those which she is to say by order of the house, as is the office of the breviary.' As to mental prayer, he says: 'We must yield to our souls two spiritual repasts in the day, if possible we may; at the least one serious one.' 'To tell you how much time you shall spend at your mental prayer, I say half an hour at the least, and that may suffice: but if you see that you can well and with profit continue in it for some time longer, I wish you to do it.' 'The soul having performed those two daily mental prayers, I do not oblige her to any more devotions, mental or vocal.'[2] He considers, therefore, the office and one hour's mental prayer to be sufficient, and in most cases as much as is desirable.

If the question be asked: Why two set half-hours? the full answer is part of the general problem to be dealt with in chapter XVIII; here it must suffice to say that it is because of the gradual changes in the conditions of Benedictine life, and its greater complexity in modern as compared with primitive times.

To sum up: Fr Baker's teaching is that Benedictines are bound by their vocation to tend to contemplation by the regular and assiduous exercise of internal contemplative

[1] *Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 305. [2] *The Alphabet*, §§ 5, 6, 13.

prayer for at least one half-hour, and if possible two, each day. This along with the office is enough; and the rest of the day may be spent in congruous intellectual or administrative work, or active good works of what kind soever, according to obedience, without the substantive contemplative character of the life being forfeited, it being supposed that some reasonable measure of silence and solitude, of abstraction and leisure, such as are found in a well-regulated religious house, are present.

A contemplative life such as this is not out of reach. It does not imply that the greater part of the day has to be spent in prayer, nor does it countenance a negative idea of the contemplative life not infrequently met with, namely, that the test of a contemplative life is abstinence from the works of the active life.[1] On the other hand, the contemplative element must be really there. The obligatory prayer of a priest's life, the daily mass and office, will not be enough, ordinarily at any rate, to make a life spent in the duties of the pastoral care, or in educational or intellectual work, contemplative as understood by Fr Baker, or by St Gregory.[2] They require that the two lives, the active and the contemplative, be both really there, and that the life actually lived be made up of alternations of them. This is a 'mixed life,' according to the meaning of St Thomas, who defines the mixed life to be one in which 'the work of the active life flows from the fulness of contemplation' (2-2, clxxxviii, 6); he further brings out his meaning when he says that when one passes from the

[1] A concrete case of the combination of the two lives is seen in Dame Gertrude More, Fr Baker's principal disciple. She certainly was one of his 'pure contemplatives'; and yet she led to the end a busy life, full of activities. He says: 'Who could have supposed from Dame Gertrude's carriage that she was pursuing a spiritual course, or was in any way apt for an internal life?' 'Even after she had entered on her spiritual course, outside the times of recollection she was scarcely less active than before. All the business that the house could afford for all its members was hardly enough to satisfy the activity of her mind. There was nothing concerning the house, great or little, but she had head or hand, or both, in it. None conversed more at the grate; none wrote more letters or with greater ease. She willingly took on herself the duties of cellarer and the charge of the lay sisters; and the abbess she assisted daily, and almost hourly, as occasions arose. Yet at her recollections she was able to exercise contemplative prayer, frequently in its high degrees (*Inner Life and Writings of D. G. M.*, 1910; and my review thereon in *Downside Review*, 1911).

[2] This might be enforced from Bishop Hedley's posthumous *Retreat for Priests.*

contemplative life to the mixed, this must be 'by way of addition, not by way of subtraction' (2-2, clxxxii, 1, ad. 3). In the mixed life, therefore, the contemplative element must be the predominant one, and the active element must be grafted on to it, but must not supplant it.

If the answer here given be a true answer to the question: In what sense is Benedictine life contemplative? and if it be also one practically workable for Benedictine monks in these our days, I shall consider this chapter to be the most valuable contribution in the volume to the theory of Benedictine life.

It will be useful, therefore, to compare its conclusions with those of certain recognised authorities on Benedictine life and history.

In his great volume of *Monastic Disquisitions*, to be spoken of in chapter XI, Benedict Haeften examines this question with his usual care and soundness. He concludes: 'The principal scope of our Rule is the performance of the works of the contemplative life; to this are joined, in a secondary way, the works of the active or mixed life, according as the wants of the Church, the opportunities of the place, or the nature of the individual, may demand.' [1]

According to Mabillon, 'the end of the monastic state was always considered to be in brief the personal sanctification of the individual, intercessory prayer for the wants of others, and when charity or some special necessity required, works undertaken for the good of the Christian commonwealth.' [2] Finally, of St Augustine and his companions, Cardinal Gasquet says, speaking of their life in Canterbury as portrayed by Ven. Bede: 'They pray, they live the life of the Church in contemplation and in labour.' [3]

[1] Lib. II, tract. vii, disq. 5.

[2] I owe this valuable testimony of Mabillon to Cardinal Gasquet's *Introductory Sketch*, p. xix; but no reference is given and I am unable to find the original.

[3] *Ibid.* p. ix.

# APPENDIX TO CHAPTERS IV TO VIII

## LIST OF SPIRITUAL WRITERS

THESE five chapters, IV to VIII, endeavour to lay down the broad lines, as traced in the Rule and in Benedictine tradition, of personal religion for Benedictine monks and nuns, the intimate relations of the individual soul with God, in self-discipline, in training in virtue, and in communion with God by prayer. This is the 'spiritual life,' or the 'inner life,' in its entire range as conceived according to Benedictine ideas. It may be of use to provide a list of those authors and works that appear to be pre-eminently suitable for the formation and development of this Benedictine spirituality. The object is not to give a list of books that might be read profitably by Benedictines, but to offer a selection of such as seem especially calculated to foster a spiritual life consonant with the principles and ideas that have been here indicated as characteristically Benedictine. The Bible is not included, though it was St Benedict's chief spiritual book, as it must be of all his children; nor are such works of universal application included as St Augustine's *Confessions* or the *Imitation of Christ;* nor again the classical works of the great mystics. And without doubt there are omissions of works that might well claim a place in the list. After all, it can be but a personal selection, just those books that I have found most helpful in the endeavour to promote in my own soul the kind of spiritual life that appears to me to be Benedictine.

The first place must be held by the writings named by St Benedict himself and recommended by him to his children: Cassian, the Lives of the Egyptian Fathers, and St Basil (Rule, XLII, LXXIII).

CASSIAN (435).—As we have seen, Cassian was, next to Holy Scripture, St Benedict's book of predilection. How minute and accurate was his knowledge of it, and how much he owed to it in writing his Rule may be seen in the 'Index Scriptorum' to my edition of the Rule. Cassian's work was, I believe, the first considerable scientific exposition ever composed on the spiritual life, and it remains to this day in many respects the finest and best, and the one that searches

most deeply into the human, or at any rate, the monastic heart; and the most wonderful thing about it is its actuality and practicality still in this our twentieth century. The best edition is Petschenig's in the Vienna Corpus (2 vols. 1886-8); but the old edition of the Benedictine Alard Gazet is still of great value for its copious and excellent notes (1616; reprinted in Migne, P.L. xlix). An inferior English translation, of the Conferences only, made more than half a century ago, has been supplanted by an excellent one of the entire work, by Bishop Gibson, in the Library of post-Nicene Writers.

LIVES AND SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS OF THE EGYPTIAN DESERTS. St Benedict twice recommends the *Vitae Patrum*. The great mass of material that goes under this name has been collected, in its Latin form, in Rosweyd's folio volume (1615 : Migne, P.L. lxxiii) in ten books, and my 'Index Scriptorum' shows that St Benedict was acquainted with many of the treatises here brought together. Of this literature Bishop Ullathorne says: 'The profound maxims of wisdom and experience gathered by reverential pens from the lips of the Egyptian monks enlighten the devout souls of the Church to this day. From their solitudes they had a great mission to the world, not only a mission of prayer for the needs of the world, but a great mission to edify and instruct the ages after them. The directive books of all religious orders glow with light from their wisdom; and the manuals of piety that at this day guide devout persons living in the world are studded with their holy maxims. The tens of thousands of devout women, in active communities, who in these days toil for God and for the poor, receive a great part of their religious wisdom from the contemplative Fathers of the Oriental deserts' (*Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 298). The greater part of this material exists in English, translated from Syriac, in Dr Budge's *Paradise of the Fathers* (2 vols. 1907), and a selection of the Apophthegmata, or Sayings, is in Canon Hannay's *Wisdom of the Desert* (1904). St Benedict gives no indication of any knowledge of Palladius' *Lausiac History* (Bk. viii in Rosweyd), but it is second to none in value and interest; an English translation by Mr Lowther Clarke has appeared in the S.P.C.K. series, 'Translations of Early Documents.'

ST BASIL (379).—St Benedict knew St Basil's Rules in the Latin redaction of Rufinus, and he definitely cites them in a few places. His whole conception indeed of the monastic life was more beholden to St Basil than to Cassian, who never got away from the eremitical idea. For this reason, though St Benedict speaks only of the Rule, all St Basil's monastic and ascetic works are worthy of special study by the Benedictine. St Basil's 'Ascetica' form a section of vol. II of the Benedictine edition; Lowther Clarke criticises the various

contents, some of which are commonly recognised as spurious.[1] To the genuine 'Ascetica,' the two sets of Rules and the Moralia and some sermons, a considerable number of the Epistles should be added, especially the early correspondence with Gregory of Nazianzen.[2]

ST GREGORY THE GREAT (604).—It would be a complete mistake to estimate the Morals as a commentary on Job, or the Homilies as an exposition of Ezechiel. The kind of material that is to be found in these works has been sampled in the foregoing chapters sufficiently to show that they are, as Dudden says, 'a veritable treasure-house of sixth-century theology and ethics' (i, 194). They should be read without any thought of Job or Ezechiel and without any attention to the constant allegorising, as positive teaching over the whole range of religious duty and life. If read as the inmost thoughts on the deepest subjects of a singularly holy and lofty-minded man, their religious value and also their beauty will be appreciated. It has seemed to me that a co-ordinated exposition of the ascetic side of the Morals, that concerned with Christian life and religious effort, would give a luminous, exhilarating, and most practical contribution to Christian ascetic and spiritual literature of quite extraordinary value. And certainly for the spiritual formation of Benedictines the value of the Morals can hardly be exaggerated, as they were St Gregory's private teaching to his own Benedictine brethren. The Morals exist in a good English translation (4 vols.) in the Oxford Library of the Fathers.

One better acquainted than I am with the literature of the early Middle Ages would probably be able to name writers and works between St Gregory and St Bernard, whose teaching on the spiritual life is akin to theirs, and would illustrate the traditional ideas and practice in the Benedictine monasteries of the purely Benedictine period. But I must come at once to

ST BERNARD (1153).—What has been said of St Gregory's Morals may be said also of St Bernard's Sermons on the Canticle. The tone is more emotional and the style more florid, but these also are full of good things for Benedictines, being St Bernard's intimate conferences addressed to his monks. The sermons have been translated into English by Eales (1896). The symbolism is apt to give offence: it 'sees in the Bride the soul pining for union with God, and in the Bridegroom the Divine Love which sanctifies, purifies, and elevates it to Itself' (Eales). This allegorism

[1] Such are the 'Constitutions' and the 'Punishments.'

[2] The following are the principal monastic Epistles: 2, 14, 22, 42, 94, 188, 199, 207, 217, 223; and the first six Epistles of St Gregory Naz.; also the latter's Oratio 43, being the funeral panegyric on Basil.

was not invented by St Bernard, but was the established Christian tradition, going back to Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret, and many others. The question is dealt with by Eales (Introductory Essay), and, more generally, by E. Underhill (*Mysticism*, p. 163). Here it will suffice to invite any who have read the book to say if, in fact, they found it to contain an element that could be thought sensuous or erotic. My belief is that the answer must be that it is all so spiritualised and elevated as to be above suspicion of any such taint. This is St Bernard's work in which the teaching on Benedictine spiritual life is most concentrated. But it is to be found also scattered through others, as the Sermons and Letters, and the treatise on 'The Love of God.'

Shortly after St Bernard came four remarkable Benedictine nuns, all mystics, who have left considerable writings, Hildegarde who died in 1179, and the two Mechtildes and Gertrude a century later. Here we find ourselves in an utterly different atmosphere, in another domain: for these were prophetesses, seers of panoramic visions, hearers of revelations, recipients of mysterious communications. If I have been right in regarding the absence of all such things in Cassian, St Gregory, and St Bernard as characteristic of their spirituality, and characteristic of the purest tradition of Benedictine spirituality represented by them, then shall I be right in passing by in this place these four saints who figure so largely in later books on mysticism.

I refrain also from mention of the well-known works of the classic English and German mystics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, only singling out as a sample, on account of its more comprehensive and orderly method of presentation, the English book, Hylton's *Ladder of Perfection* (*cir.* 1400), of which Bishop Ullathorne wrote: 'It is perhaps the clearest, best balanced, and best adapted for wide circulation of any of them' (Letter to D. Guy, in ed. of 1869). It is also one of the books most highly recommended by Fr Baker.

Up to this point, and for a century and more after, there was no break in the continuity of the Christian tradition in the matter of contemplation and mysticism. Here it will be helpful to refer to Dom John Chapman's article 'Mysticism (Christian, Roman Catholic)' in Hastings' *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*. He defines mystical theology according to old ideas, as 'the direct, secret, incommunicable knowledge of God received in contemplation, as opposed to natural theology, the knowledge of God obtained through creatures, and dogmatic theology, the knowledge of God by revelation.' He traces the idea through East and West, and

shows that up to the middle of the sixteenth century there was a continuous tradition as to the reality of the knowledge or experience of God received in contemplation, and as to such contemplation being the natural and normal term of a spiritual life of self-discipline and prayer, and as such, a thing to be desired and aimed at by all and several who give themselves up to such a life, as the end they may hope to attain to; further, that the usual way of attaining to contemplation was by recollection and introversion, suppressing the workings of imagination and reasoning, and exercising the prayer of affections and acts of the will and aspirations and of loving attention to God. (See what was said on 'Contemplative Prayer' towards close of chapter VIII.) But, as Dom Chapman shows, a change was gradually introduced, the great scholastic Doctors, though many of them, as SS. Thomas and Bonaventure, were themselves ecstatics, had no place in their intellectual system for mystical theology: thus St Bonaventure 'makes a few rare references to mysticism'; and as for St Thomas, 'There are only a very few casual references to the subject in the whole of his voluminous works.' During the sixteenth century 'formal "meditation" by the use of the imagination together with elaborate thinking out of a subject became common'—the very antithesis of the old notion of contemplative prayer. And in the next century 'the dogmatic theologians were rising up against mystical theology; the great Dominicans, following the example of St Thomas in his *Summa*, ignored it; the great Jesuits denied its very existence (as Suarez).' This Dom Chapman calls 'the reversal of tradition.' These tendencies ran their course in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the emphasis being more and more laid on extraordinary manifestations, revelations, visions, ecstasies, raptures, stigmatisations and levitations, etc. Happily the twentieth century is witnessing a strong reaction to the older traditional ways of contemplation and contemplative prayer, the prayer of aspirations and of loving attention to God. As might be expected, the Benedictine school of spirituality, as far as there be any such, has clung throughout to the old ideas inherited from St Gregory and St Bernard. There was in their origin nothing specifically Benedictine; they were the ideas universally current in the Church up to the sixteenth century, and Benedictines quite naturally and as a matter of course absorbed them and adhered to them when new ways came into vogue. So that the writers of the last four centuries to be named here are the more prominent representatives of the old ideas during the times when they had gone out of fashion, who helped to keep alive the traditional notions of contemplation and prayer. Not all are Benedictines, but most of them are.

SS. TERESA (1582) AND JOHN OF THE CROSS (1591).—As the great protagonists and exponents of contemplative prayer in all its grades, lower and higher, these two Carmelite saints challenge the first place here. Their writings are strongly autobiographical, describing their own highest spiritual experiences, and so are practical only for those raised to the like heights of prayer and union with God. But they contain also instructions for all who have embarked on a course of prayer and the spiritual life on the old traditional lines, and so far forth they are very well suited for Benedictines. The following list refers to the chief of such portions of their works:

St Teresa:

*Way of Perfection.*

*Interior Castle:* the first Four 'Mansions.'

Both translated by the Benedictine dames of Stanbrook, to which are all the references.

*Her Life:* written by herself; the corresponding portion, cc. viii-xv. (Fr Zimmerman's edition of David Lewis' translation.)

St John of the Cross (ed. Zimmerman):

*The Obscure Night of Sense.*

*Spiritual Canticle*, Stanzas i-xii.

*The Living Flame*, Stanza iii, §§ 29-77 (in Lewis' trans. line iii, §§ 4-16).

Here, in the highest of all St John's writings, we meet with a digression, as remarkable as it is unexpected, on beginners in contemplation. It is probably the clearest and best account of the beginning of pure contemplative prayer. He teaches that when the soul of the beginner is in some degree detached from the world 'God begins at once to introduce it into the state of contemplation, and that very quickly, especially in the case of religious, because these having renounced the world, quickly fashion their senses and desires according to God; and they have therefore to pass at once from meditation to contemplation. This passage takes place when the discoursive acts and meditation fail, when sensible sweetness and first fervours cease, when the soul cannot make reflections as before, nor find any sensible comfort, but is fallen into aridity, because the chief matter is changed into the spirit, and the spirit is not cognisable by sense. . . . The soul must be lovingly intent upon God, without distinctly eliciting other acts beyond these to which He inclines it; it must be as it were passive, making no efforts of its own, purely, simply and lovingly intent upon God, as a man who opens his eyes with loving attention' (§§ 34-6). The whole piece

is well worth reading. This is the prayer explained in the little tract 'Prayer of Simplicity,' already referred to (p. 107).

There is an admirable work entitled *Practice of Mental Prayer and of Perfection according to St Teresa and St John of the Cross* (Desclée, Bruges), made up of extracts from their works, brought together and put into orderly sequence. It is in eight small volumes in French, whereof five have been translated into English. Volumes III and IV will be found particularly appropriate for Benedictines.

ST FRANCIS OF SALES (1622).—After the dry wine of St John of the Cross, St Francis of Sales will seem 'fruity,' even luscious. But he was a profound theologian and a mystic, so that his treatise *Of the Love of God* speaks the language both of knowledge and experience. It is an extended and systematic work on mystical theology wholly instinct with the traditional ideas on affective prayer and contemplation. It has been well translated into English by the late Dom Benedict Mackey. Many of the spiritual letters, and of those of his friend and disciple St Jane Frances de Chantal, contain instructions of great value on the traditional method.

To return to Benedictine writers.

BLOSIUS (1566).—The writings of Louis de Blois, abbot of Liessies in Hainault, fill a large folio volume and consist of a number of treatises, ascetical, devotional, and mystical. He made devotional collections from Holy Scripture and from the writings of SS. Augustine and Gregory, and he knew intimately and used freely in his books the great German mystics Suso, Ruysbroeck, and above all Tauler. Especially did he compose collections of affective and aspirative prayer for daily use; the 'Exercise on the Passion' that stands among the 'Devotions' of Dame Gertrude More and the 'Patterns of Devout Exercises' added to *Sancta Sophia* is taken bodily from Blosius, and it has also been translated direct from him into English, in a little volume under its own title, *The Oratory of the Faithful Soul.* His four principal treatises were printed in Latin under Cardinal Wiseman's auspices in 1859. Three of them were translated into English in 1871, and reprinted since, under the title *Spiritual Works of Louis of Blois;* the fourth, the most important of all, the *Book of Spiritual Instruction*, was translated by the late Fr Bertrand Wilberforce, O.P., a great lover of Blosius, to whose Preface I direct attention; it is one of the best books of directions for contemplatives. *The Mirror for Monks* is well known, and contains good examples of Blosius' conception of the practice of mental prayer. A Benedictine himself, his teaching is wholly consonant with the best Benedictine tradition.

FR AUGUSTINE BAKER (1641) and DAME GERTRUDE MORE (1633).—Fr Serenus Cressy's well-known digest of Fr Baker's

treatises, *Sancta Sophia*, has already been many times referred to, and certain items of its teaching have been singled out as being exaggerated or questionable. But these I think exhaust the points that appear to me to be open to criticism, and the great sweep of the book, its instruction on mortification, prayer and contemplation, is in every way as solid as it is admirable, so that it well deserves the eulogium passed on it by E. Underhill as 'one of the most lucid and orderly of guides to the contemplative life.'[1] Bishop Hedley's appreciation, to be referred to presently, should be read. Only one of Fr Baker's actual treatises has been printed, *The Inner Life of Dame Gertrude More*,[2] his principal disciple, in whom his teaching and direction came to their fullest fruit. This work exhibits Fr Baker in a new light, and shows us a softer and more human side of him than would be expected from the austere heights of *Sancta Sophia*.[3] Fr Baker, if I mistake not, may rightly be regarded as the last of the line of great medieval mystics: besides being saturated in the teaching of the early doctors, Cassian, Augustine, pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory the Great and Bernard, he seems to unite in himself the three great streams of mystical teaching in the West. The early English mystics, Walter Hylton's *Ladder of Perfection* and the anonymous old English work *The Divine Cloud*; the German and Flemish mystics Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroeck, Harphius; the Spanish St Teresa and St John of the Cross: Fr Baker is deeply beholden to them all, and is instinct with their spirit.

The private papers left by Dame Gertrude More, the English Benedictine nun of Cambrai, 'a contemplative of singular charm,'[4] were prepared for publication by Fr Baker, but were not printed till 1658, in two volumes. One contained her collection, mostly from St Augustine and Blosius, of affective and aspirative prayers, suited for those who use contemplative prayer of acts of the will. It is the only thing of the kind, and has been reproduced in various forms. 'The Patterns of Devout Exercises,' added to *Sancta Sophia*, is substantially Dame Gertrude's; an abridgement was published in a tiny pocket volume in 1873, still to be had, under title *Devotions of Dame Gertrude More*; and in 1909 a somewhat rearranged edition of the work appeared under the original title *Holy Practices of a Divine Lover*, given it by Fr Baker in place of Dame Gertrude's own, *An Ideot's Devotions*. These prayers have been of immense practical help to innumerable souls.

Quite other in character is the second volume, containing the

[1] *Mysticism*, p. 559.
[2] Edited by D. Benedict Weld Blundell, 1910.
[3] See my notice *Downside Review*, July 1911.
[4] E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 558.

'Confessions of a Lover.'[1] They consist of fifty-five colloquies with God, the most intimate and highly personal outpourings, never intended for other eyes, of a deeply religious spirit elevated to a state of close union with God. There is in them such a maturity that it is difficult to realise that they are the compositions of a girl who died before she was twenty-eight.

CARDINAL BONA (Cistercian) (1674).—A great liturgical scholar, one of the three or four 'sommités' among liturgists singled out by Edmund Bishop for special mention in the Preface to *Liturgica Historica*; he wrote various ascetical and devotional tractates, and his *Via Compendii ad Deum*, published separately in a small volume (Rome 1866), and translated into English under the title, *The Easy Way to God* (1876), is an admirable treatise on mystical theology on the old traditional lines, followed by a collection of aspirative prayers.

THE MAURISTS.—Their great works in the domain of scientific erudition, editions of the Fathers, history, diplomatics, etc., have quite eclipsed their very considerable and excellent output of ascetical and devotional literature. It is of a learned and severe character, breathing an old-world piety, most solid and truly religious, and Benedictines will be well-advised not to neglect it wholly.[2] I mention only a very few of these works that have come under my personal observation, being in the library at Downside.

Dom Mège (1691), *Explication des Psaumes de David tirées des SS. Pères.*

Dom Bretagne (1694), *Méditations sur les principaux devoirs de la vie religieuse.*

Dom Martin (1696), *Pratique de la Règle de S. Benoît.*

*Conduite pour la Retraite du mois* (in *Manuel Bénédictin*, 1755).

*Méditations chrétiennes.*

Dom Bougis (1714), *Exercises spirituels tirés de la Règle de S. Benoît.*

*Méditations pour les novices.*

Dom du Sault (1724), *Entretiens avec J.-C. dans le saint Sacrement de l'autel.*

*Avis et Réflexions sur les devoirs de l'état religieux.*

Dom Morel (1731), *Entretiens Spirituels* (several vols.).

*Effusions de cœur.*

*Méditations sur la Règle de S. Benoît.*

[1] Re-edited by Dom B. Weld Blundell, 1911.

[2] These works will be found in de Lama's *Bibliothèque des Écrivains de la Congrégation de Saint Maur*; see Table, under the titles 'Entretiens,' 'Méditations.'

*Méditations chrétiennes.*

*Du Bonheur d'un simple religieux.*

Dom Vinceans (1769), *Conférences monastiques.*

These are among the best, but there are many more.

A succession of Jesuit spiritual writers carried on in the Society the tradition of the older school of contemplation. Such were Fr Balthasar Alvarez (1580), the first to understand St Teresa, to whom a chapter is devoted in *Sancta Sophia;* Père Lallemant (1635), *Doctrine Spirituelle* (translated 1855); Père Surin (1665), *Fondements de la Vie Spirituelle* (translated 1844), *Lettres Spirituelles* (translated 1892). The writings of these are all quite excellent, but, to my mind, conspicuous above them all is

PÈRE GROU (1803).—In such appreciations the personal factor plays a great part; I can only say that for me, of all spiritual writers known to me, Père Grou seems to be the one most entirely consonant with St Benedict's mind as exposed in these chapters, breathing his very spirit, interpreting the traditions of the typical Benedictine writers with a quiet but firm insistence that strongly grips the soul. This does not mean that Père Grou knew anything of St Benedict's Rule or the early Benedictines. What it means is only this: as has been said, there is no Benedictine school or system of spirituality: St Benedict, St Gregory, and the rest merely took the standard teaching current in the Church from the fifth to the twelfth centuries; and Père Grou has got back to that early teaching, and has reinterpreted it with a clearness and a living vigour all his own. The resemblance between him and Fr Baker is very great: on all the fundamental topics of the inner life—renunciation, mortification, attention to the interior guidance of the Holy Ghost, and above all, prayer—their teaching is strikingly alike. Père Grou's principal work is the *Manual for Interior Souls* (recent and cheap French edition, and translation); also *Spiritual Maxims* (French and English), and *How to Pray*, being the translation of one section of a work called *The School of Jesus Christ.*

Of recent writers, only three English Benedictines are mentioned.

BISHOP ULLATHORNE (1889).—His trilogy—'those wise and grave books, so truly spiritual' (Bp. Hedley)—forms a massive treatise on the spiritual life, most genuinely Benedictine in character. The chapters in *Christian Patience* on prayer and contemplation may be singled out as especially justifying this claim. The sermon in the *Ecclesiastical Discourses* on the Benedictine saints must be mentioned as expressing this great monk's thoughts on the spirit of the Rule under which he served God.

BISHOP HEDLEY (1915).—Our other great English Benedictine bishop also has left writings replete with the truest and best Bene-

dictine teaching: such are the well-known *Retreat*, especially the chapters on the 'Hidden Life,' and the 'Public Life'; and the two Retreats published since his death, one for priests, the other for religious. But worthy of special mention here is the appreciation of *Sancta Sophia* first published in the *Dublin Review*, but reprinted as a Catholic Truth Society tract, under the title *Prayer and Contemplation;* it is in effect a statement of the foundations of mystical theology, popular in character, inspiring in tone, and conformable to the best Benedictine tradition on contemplation and the spiritual life.

And lastly

CARDINAL GASQUET.—The first portion of his *Sketch of Monastic History*, so often referred to, is an exposition of the spiritual principles of the life, making them stand out with great clearness and elevation; while in the little book *Religio Religiosi*, published on the occasion of his jubilee of receiving the habit, 1916, the Cardinal gives utterance to his personal thoughts on the most intimate aspects of the life, after having lived it for fifty years, with a simplicity and self-revelation that are as attractive as they are instructive.

# CHAPTER IX

## THE BENEDICTINE VOWS

THE question is often discussed whether St Benedict was the first to introduce the definite formal monastic vows. A sentence from Palladius[1] shows that the practice was not universal, and in Egypt not common *cir.* 400. I have said elsewhere that, apart from the profession of celibacy, formal monastic vows were not made by St Basil's monks. Mr Lowther Clarke, however, shows reason for believing that St Basil did institute permanent monastic vows,[2] and I have no difficulty in acquiescing in his judgement. I do not find any trace of them in the early Latin Rules or in Cassian.[3] I believe that there is no evidence before St Benedict's Rule of a written and signed promise, to be preserved in the monastery. But, vows or no vows, once a man had definitely devoted himself to the monastic life, it was at all times looked on as a lifelong obligation, and its abandonment was regarded as an apostasy.

The traditional Benedictine vow is couched in the following terms: Promitto coram Deo et sanctis ejus stabilitatem et conversionem morum et obedientiam secundum Regulam Sancti Patris Benedicti. The earliest extant text is that contained in the Commentary of Paul Warnefrid:[4] Promitto de stabilitate mea, et conversione morum meorum saecularium, et obedientia coram Deo et sanctis ejus. This form is derived from c. LVIII of the Rule, wherein the profession ceremony is described.[5] Although this triple vow stands unmistakably in the Rule, there was a practice widespread in the

[1] *Lausiac History*, 'Prologus.' [2] *St Basil*, pp. 107-9.

[3] Pourrat, *La Spiritualité chrétienne*, p. 264, says that in St Augustine's monastery the three religious vows were taken; but the references he gives have nothing to say to it, nor can I find any justification in the Maurist Index.

[4] Probably *cir.* 775, see chapter XI.

[5] For actual text of Rule see below, p. 135.

eighth and ninth centuries whereby only stability and obedience were vowed.[1] During the second half of the ninth century the original triple form reasserted itself and has been universal ever since.

It is to be noted that only one of the three recognised religious vows, obedience, is explicitly contained in the formula. It has been shown in chapter IV that the other two, poverty and chastity, are included as integral parts of the idea of the Rule. Sometimes these two vows have been added to St Benedict's three in the profession form, but usually they have not been explicitly mentioned, it being understood that they are included implicitly; so that those professed according to St Benedict's formula are bound to poverty and chastity in exactly the same manner as those who take the ordinary religious vows.[2] Thus Benedictine monks and nuns take the equivalent of five vows. St Benedict's ideas on poverty will be considered in the following chapter; in this an attempt will be made to determine the import of the three formal promises or vows imposed by St Benedict.[3]

## STABILITY

The determination of the meaning and force of Benedictine stability is, in my judgement, perhaps the most difficult point in a study of Benedictine life. It is felt on all hands that the introduction of this vow was St Benedict's most important and characteristic contribution to the course of Western monachism.[4] Yet when we come to ask what

[1] See further below, p. 129.

[2] Pourrat (*op. cit.* p. 389) says that St Benedict's monks at profession took the three ordinary religious vows; this is certainly wrong.

[3] The earliest formal discussion of the import of the Benedictine vows is that by Bernard of Monte Cassino in his *Speculum Monachorum*, 1274, a very interesting treatise, edited by Dom H. Walter (Freiburg 1901).

[4] So Card. Gasquet: 'Stability may be regarded as the note of St Benedict's legislation for the monastic order; it is the key to the spirit of monasticism as interpreted by his Rule' (*Sketch*, p. xii). So Bp. Ullathorne: 'St Benedict's great reform is expressed by the single word Stability' (*Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 305). It is to be noticed, however, that the idea of stability, though not the word or the vow, is found in the Rule for Monks of Caesarius of Arles, which was written, probably, some twenty or twenty-five years before St Benedict's, and was almost certainly known to him: 'In primis si quis ad convers[at]ionem venerit, ea conditione excipiatur, ut usque ad mortem ibi perseveret' (*Reg. ad Mon.* c. 1). However, it was St Benedict who enforced and propagated the idea.

stability is, we find a considerable divergence of view among the standard commentators. Here if anywhere it is necessary to ascertain what St Benedict's own idea was, what in his mind was the meaning attached to the term stability.

In this investigation we may conveniently take as the point of departure the definition or description of stability accepted at the Congress of Presidents of the Black Monk congregations held in Rome in May 1907: 'By the vow of stability, the monk attaches himself to the monastery of his profession, he associates himself to the monastic family there existing, and promises he will never withdraw his neck from the yoke of regular observance according to the Rule of St Benedict.'[1] It will not be questioned that the presidents' definition is true so far as it goes, but it may be questioned whether it brings out the full meaning attached to the idea of stability in St Benedict's mind; whether it has not been formulated with an eye rather on present conditions than on those of St Benedict's day. In order to arrive at an understanding of St Benedict's mind, we must examine the places in the Rule where stability is mentioned.

(1) c. IV (end): After an enumeration of the various 'Instruments of Good Works,' St Benedict declares that the workshop wherein they are all to be assiduously plied is 'the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the congregation,' 'congregation' meaning, as it always does in the Rule, the community resident in a particular monastery.[2] Here 'enclosure' and 'stability' are equated as practically equivalent, and the idea of stability is seen to imply permanent life in the monastery. This was St Benedict's intention when he legislated for cenobites, or 'monasterial' monks. It appears also in other places of the Rule already referred to in chapter III; here it will suffice to recall the most striking of them all, 'persevering in the monastery until death' (*Prol. fin.*).

(2) We pass on to the other occurrences of the word stability in the Rule. In c. LVIII it occurs once before the

[1] *Protocollum*, 15, cf. *Quaestiones*, 17. This idea is expressed by Cardinal Gasquet: 'By the vow of stability the monastery is erected into a family, to which the monk binds himself for ever' (*Sketch*, p. xii).

[2] 'Officina vero, ubi haec omnia diligenter operemur, claustra sunt monasterii et stabilitas in congregatione.' For 'congregatio' see Index verborum in my ed. of the *Regula*, and compare St Gregory (*Dial.* ii, 3).

profession form: at certain points in the course of the novitiate the Rule is to be read to the novice, and he is to be allowed to continue his noviceship, 'si promiserit de stabilitatis suae perseverantia,' say the later texts; but the genuine reading is 'si promiserit de stabilitate sua perseverantiam'—if he promise perseverance in the matter of stability. This shows that stability is something more than perseverance in the monastic life, something concerning which perseverance may be promised.[1]

(3) In c. LX, in the case of priests or clerics wishing to be received into the community, the condition of their acceptance as members is that they promise the observance of the Rule and their personal stability (propria stabilitas). Similarly, in c. LXI a monk who comes from another monastery and wishes to join one of St Benedict's monasteries must 'firmare stabilitatem suam,' make firm his stability. There is no implied blame in such a monk having left his former monastery; it is recognised that he may be a most desirable subject, and may even deserve to be given some precedence in rank; but once received in St Benedict's monastery he may not pass from it to another. Other monks might pass from monastery to monastery; St Benedict's monks might not. Stability is—or was in St Benedict's day—a Benedictine speciality. It meant something more than perseverance in the monastic state, for this was binding on all monks; something more than permanence in claustral life; something more than the lifelong observance of St Benedict's Rule: though it did include all these.

The full meaning of Benedictine stability as understood by St Benedict has, in my judgement, been correctly grasped and clearly expressed by that great English monk and bishop, William Bernard Ullathorne, in the following words: 'St Benedict binds his monks by the vow of stability to an irrevocable life in community, and in the community that has witnessed his training and profession.'[2] It must, I believe, be held that

[1] The evidence of the texts is recorded on p. 141 of my edition. D. Morin reads as original text of the principal MS, St Gall 914 (see chapter XI); 'de stabilitate sive perseverantia;' but H. Plenkers declares the first hand wrote 'sua' not 'sive,' which would be a unique reading, and certainly one to be rejected.

[2] 'Sermon on Benedictine Saints' (*Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 310). It is worthy of note that the two non-Benedictine writers so often quoted in these pages understand St Benedict's stability in the same way. Hannay (*Christian Monasticism*, p. 222): 'He insists on the "stabilitas loci"; he fixes the monk in the particular monastery where he makes his vows.' Workman (*Monastic Ideal*, p. 147): 'The vow of stability bound the monk to his first monastery.'

by stability St Benedict intended that his monks should 'persevere till death,' not merely in a monastery, but in the monastery of their profession. In other words, I accept as St Benedict's mind what has been called 'local stability' in its most rigid and narrow sense. And this is what St Benedict found in the Rule of Caesarius of Arles: 'Let him be received on the condition of persevering there until death' (above, p. 123), where 'ibi' designates the monastery in which the monk had been received, and fixes the idea of strict local stability.

This conclusion is enforced by further considerations based on the Rule. The monk from another monastery who came to St Benedict's was already bound irrevocably to permanence in the monastic life; he was bound to live in a monastery somewhere; the Rule assumes that he is a good monk: the one thing that St Benedict exacts from him as the condition of incorporation is that he should 'make firm his stability,' fix himself for good and all in the monastery of his adoption. Also there is the passage declaring that from the day of profession it is not lawful for the monk 'to go forth from the monastery' (egredi de monasterio, c. LVIII *med.*). This expression deserves consideration. The concluding words of c. LXVI show that St Benedict looked on it as undesirable, and a thing to be reduced to the smallest dimensions, that the monks should go outside of the monastery precincts. Yet journeys forth, even for more than a day, are contemplated (cc. L, LI, LXVII); and the going out of the enclosure of the monastery (claustra monasterii egredi) is one of the things for which the abbot's permission had to be obtained (c. LXVII). But St Benedict's term for abandoning the monastic life is simply 'leaving the monastery' (egredi de monasterio, c. LVIII *med. et fin.*; c. XXIX). And when it is remembered that St Benedict, though contemplating the likelihood of his Rule being followed in other monasteries than his own, still legislates only for single monasteries without relations with other monasteries, it will be recognised that by the very nature of the case the monastery wherein the monk was to persevere till death could be none other, in St Benedict's intention, than his house of profession. And so, according to St Benedict's mind (and our object now is to ascertain in the most literal way,

without gloss or interpretation, what his mind was) 'stability in the congregation,' in the community, meant nothing less than abiding for life in one's monastery of profession, as the habitual place of residence.

Difficulties arise at once. It will be urged that if such conception of stability had been accepted there could never have been the foundation of one monastery from another; nay, St Benedict himself in going from Subiaco to Monte Cassino violated stability. And what if a community is compelled to leave its monastery and go elsewhere, as in the many expulsions of recent times? It may be answered that these are extreme cases to be dealt with as they arise; in such cases stability would lie in the community holding together and re-establishing their monastery elsewhere. Similarly, it has always been understood that for a swarm to go out from a monastery in order to found a new one, is a proper thing and not a breaking of stability. Again, a monk, or more usually a band of monks, might go forth to preach the Gospel in heathen lands: and here stability would be carried out in their resuming conventual life and forming a monastery as soon as circumstances permit, as did Augustine and his companions at Canterbury. As Bishop Ullathorne points out, the early Benedictine missionaries established monasteries not parishes.[1]

Again, from the earliest times bishops have often been drawn from the monasteries; it was so in Egypt, and it was so in Europe before St Benedict, witness Lerins; and ere long Benedictine monks became bishops in increasing numbers throughout Europe. They left their monastery and passed quite out of the conditions of cenobitical life: yet we know that most of them, certainly very many of them, continued good monks and preserved in heart and soul the spirit of their state; for a large proportion of the Benedictine saints were the bishops. Similarly, in later times and in missionary countries, where the supply of priests was inadequate, the Holy See has sanctioned Benedictine monks serving parishes, even singly, and has imposed on them the obligation of going out of claustral life for this purpose when called upon by their superiors to do so, granting an exemption from cenobitical

[1] *Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 315.

life. The case of such is analogous to that of the monk-bishops. And there are other causes that have led the ecclesiastical authorities to allow, or compel, Benedictine monks to live out of their monastery, at any rate for considerable periods; witness the legislation of the Bull 'Summi Magistri' on compulsory frequentation of universities. And so the commentators draw up lists of the cases in which Benedictines may lawfully be living away from their monastery of profession.

In face of these broad and patent facts, it has to be said that the Benedictine vow of stability, according to any historically tolerable interpretation, such as the above-cited definition of the presidents, is not as the vow of chastity, a thing absolute that may never be infringed. It has always been held that lawful authority has the power of over-ruling it in the case of the individual monk, given sufficient reason for so doing. And it has to be remembered that besides the central idea of abiding for life in one's own monastery of profession, there are included in the idea of stability certain wider principles, or, so to say, outer zones, a sort of penumbra around the nucleus, or a series of concentric circles. There is the idea of permanence in Benedictine life, 'under the yoke of regular observance according to the Holy Rule,' as is expressed in the presidents' definition; there is the idea of permanence in cenobitical life, life in community; there is the idea of lifelong membership in the community into which the monk has been incorporated; and lastly, there is the idea of fidelity to the spirit of the teaching and interior obligations of the Rule, even though one's lot be cast, as is the case with Benedictine bishops, in conditions in which the exterior observance of stability is not possible.

The case of Benedictines in regard to St Benedict's stability seems to be analogous to that of Franciscans in regard to St Francis' poverty. Each ideal was central in the mind of the respective patriarchs, was his own most special contribution, to which he attached supreme importance. And yet in each case it has proved, in its literal acceptation, unworkable, so that it has been necessary for authority to introduce some mitigation. I believe it is correct to say that even the most 'observant' Franciscans, not excepting the Capuchins, nowadays accept the dispensations of the Bull 'Quo elongati' in

regard to tenure of property by trustees; but it was precisely against these dispensations that Br Leo and the First Companions and the early Franciscan Spirituals or Zealots fought, and around this very point was waged the 'poverty contest' among Franciscans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. And just as it is right that Franciscans, while accepting the mitigations, should not obscure or water down St Francis' own idea of Lady Poverty, but should keep it ever clearly before their mind in all its grand and heavenly simplicity, as an ideal never to be lost sight of, always to be cherished; so must Benedictines, in spite of exceptions dictated by the logic of facts, ever hold clearly before their minds, as the ideal, St Benedict's own conception of stability. For Benedictines or for Franciscans, out of opportunism and compliance with the course of their history, to tamper with or explain away the ideals of their founder on these points would be bad history and bad religion.

To the Benedictine, then, stability must mean, as Bishop Ullathorne has told us, an irrevocable life in community, and in the community of his profession. This is what it meant for St Benedict. And this primitive local conception of stability, 'stabilitas in loco,' stands out strongly defined in St Bernard's letter to be quoted at the end of this chapter, under obedience: he feels it necessary to justify himself from the charge of having violated stability, in that he left Citeaux, the house of his profession, in order to be founder and abbot of Clairvaux.

Having thus endeavoured to determine and explain St Benedict's own meaning with regard to stability, we shall now briefly pass in review the principal indications of Benedictine tradition thereon.

The earliest extant Benedictine Profession Book, that of St Gall in the ninth century,[1] exhibits a variety of forms of the vow. The earliest form therein contained is: 'I promise obedience and stability before God and His saints'; nothing

[1] Printed in the volume of *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, entitled *Libri Confraternitatum*, pp. 111-33 (1884). An exhaustive study of the Benedictine profession-formula (*Geschichte der Ben. Professformel*) has been made by Dom Ildefons Herwegen, since 1913 abbot of Maria Laach, in Heft 3 of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums* (Münster 1912), wherein most of the forms of the vow now to be referred to may conveniently be found.

more. This goes on for a long time, and then variations appear: first, now and then, stability, conversion of manners, obedience; then, stability and conversion of manners, and even stability alone. Towards the end, the triple vow of the Rule predominates, and the words 'according to the Rule of St Benedict' are added to the obedience promised. Thus, though conversion is very frequently omitted, and obedience sometimes, stability is in no case omitted; it is the only one of the three vows that was taken in every single case recorded in the St Gall book. And so it is in all the forms of the Benedictine vow that have come down to us, stability is the one thing always there, and sometimes alone. This is significant, as it shows that stability was looked on as the essential and sufficient element of a Benedictine profession, and that it was held to cover the whole range of Benedictine life and obligations; thus a form survives: 'Promitto stabilitatem huius loci secundum Regulam S. Benedicti.'[1] In this and in other early forms of the vows the idea of local stability is made explicit: 'stabilitas huius loci,' or 'huius monasterii S. N.' At Monte Cassino in the eighth century the vow of stability was paraphrased: 'I promise that for all my days will I persevere in this monastery, now and henceforth.'[2] The expression 'stabilitas loci' is used by Paschasius Radbert, *cir.* 850.[3]

We now come to the commentators.[4] The earliest of them, Paul Warnefrid (*cir.* 775), in c. LVIII merely explains stability by 'perseverance'; but what is said in c. IV shows that he means perseverance in the monastery. Hildemar (*cir.* 850), as usual, incorporates with slight enlargements the words of Warnefrid. Smaragdus, Hildemar's contemporary,

[1] Martène, Commentary on *Regula*, c. LVIII (P.L. lxvi, 820).

[2] 'Promitto me . . . omnibus diebus meis in hoc sancto monasterio amodo et deinceps perseveraturum et in omni obedientia quodcumque mihi praeceptum fuerit obediturum.' Thus the Monte Cassino vow, like the early ones in the St Gall book, contained only stability and obedience. The form of the promise is given in the letter of Abbot Theodemar of Monte Cassino to Charles the Great, describing the observances and practices at Monte Cassino. This letter, the composition of Paul Warnefrid, is among the most valuable monuments of early Benedictinism (Migne, P.L. xcv, 1583; the vow, lxvi, 820). If a critical text be desired, it is Dümmler's, *Mon. Germ. Hist., Epp.* iv, 510.

[3] Migne, P.L. cxx, 1059.

[4] The Commentaries will be described and characterised in c. XI; their utterances on stability will be found in their comments on c. LVIII, the vow, and c. IV, 'stabilitas in congregatione.'

recognises explicitly the local idea, adding the gloss: 'stability of the monastery,'[1] 'stability of heart and place' (c. IV).

The definition of stability given by Bernard of Monte Cassino in the *Speculum*, 1274, seems to discard all idea of place: 'stability is a certain persevering constancy of mind, by which we strive to inhere in God alone, equally contemning prosperity and adversity' (p. 11); but c. V shows that stability in the monastery of profession is taken for granted. In his Commentary on c. IV he explains 'the stable' as those who reside in the monastery; and on c. LVIII he says that by stability the monk is bound never to abandon the monastic state, nor go forth from the monastery without necessity and the authority of the superior.

The ideas of the seventeenth-century commentators were affected by the state of things existing in their day. As will be explained in chapter XV, in many places the primitive idea of monks being incorporated in a particular monastery had been abandoned, so that with the Maurists they were professed for the congregation and had no special monastery of profession. Under such conditions the idea of local stability, or even that of belonging to a particular community, could have no place. And so the Maurist commentators tend to water down the idea of stability until there is hardly anything specifically Benedictine about it, anything that is not equally applicable to religious of all sorts; indeed Mège says as much: similarly the Benedictine editor of Cassian, Alard Gazet, in notes on Collations, xxiv, 4. Ménard and Martène[2] recognise that it implies permanence in cenobitical life. Calmet, however, maintains the primitive local meaning: 'The simplest and most literal meaning is that which understands a stability of place, and it was so that the ancients understood and practised it' (c. LVIII). In recent writers there is a growing tendency to revert to the simplicity of St Benedict's idea. Thus Dom L'Huillier, in his *Explication de la Règle*, explains stability as 'the obligation of dwelling in the place of profession,' and says: 'We hold that the true Benedictine meaning of the word stability is the meaning of a dwelling-place fixed for life' (ii, 210). Similarly,

[1] 'Promitto stabilitatem monasterii' (Form of 'Petitio,' c. LVIII).

[2] In c. IV, though not in c. LVIII.

Abbot Delatte: 'Stability has the precise meaning of permanence in the supernatural family in which one makes one's profession; of permanence in the monastery; and not merely the general perseverance in good or in the religious life.' Whilst strongly emphasising, however, the idea of permanence in conditions of Benedictine cenobitical life, and even of inclusion in the monastery, he says that in our days stability is not opposed to transference by superiors to another house of the same congregation (p. 444). Such facility in matter of translation is, manifestly, a concession to modern conditions, and it is not accepted in the older Black Monk congregations (see chapter XV). The ideas of these congregations are well expressed in the 'Notes and Observations on the Rule,' revised in 1894, which take the place of declarations in the Swiss Congregation. The monasteries of this congregation, as Einsiedeln, have had a continuous existence and tradition of a thousand years, and so the Swiss interpretation of Benedictine theory and life is invested with a peculiarly venerable authority. 'According to the mind of the Rule, by the vow of stability we promise to God perseverance till the end of life in the order, and in the place in which we have professed that order. . . . As stability is subordinate to obedience, it is not against the vow of stability if the abbot for urgent causes, as the great utility of the monastery or of the Catholic Church, should send any one of his monks elsewhere for a long time or even for life' (*Notae*, p. 44). 'We bind all the monks of our congregation to the places of their profession, in the sense that always and everywhere they remain subject to their own abbot and the Rule, allowing no change without a singular and most urgent cause' (p. 7).

What the idea of stability was in its primitive simplicity we have learned from Bishop Ullathorne. We owe to that other English Benedictine bishop, John Cuthbert Hedley, a formulation which, on the one hand, embodies to the full St Benedict's meaning, and on the other, takes count of the historical and practical difficulties that have been found in its application; so that in it we have an account of Benedictine stability that is at once true and workable, which brings out the full scope in all its aspects, and upon which it would be hardly possible to improve. 'Every Benedictine monastery,'

he says, 'is, and ought to be, a home. Whatever the external work to which a monk may find himself called, the normal thing must always be, to live in his own monastery. It would be a mistake to encourage any one to profess himself a Benedictine unless he could look forward with pleasure to live, "for better, for worse," till death itself, in the house of his profession, under the Rule and in the daily work of the choir.'[1]

It remains to collect and summarise the outcome of the foregoing discussion on stability in its practical bearings for Benedictine monks in the twentieth century.

(1) It is to be recognised that in St Benedict's mind and intention stability meant 'local stability,' the abiding till death in one's own monastery of profession.

(2) And so on the part of the monk vowing it, stability must mean the tendency, the intention, so far as it rests with himself, of living his whole life in his own monastery: his own monastery is always the normal, the natural, and in itself the right place for a Benedictine to be in.

(3) The definition of the presidents (already cited) must be accepted to the full, that in virtue of stability the monk is incorporated for life in the community of his house of profession, so that the effect of the vow of stability is to bind the monks of a Benedictine monastery together into a permanent family, united by bonds that last for life, thus forming a permanent body corporate, distinct from every other Benedictine community. This idea has been emphasised in the new Codex of Canon Law, which ordains that for translation from one monastery 'sui iuris' to another, the permission of the Holy See has to be obtained (can. 632).

(4) Stability implies also permanence in the conditions of cenobitical life, 'irrevocable life in community' as Bishop Ullathorne has told us. And he exhorts us to aim at such a state of things that 'the whole solidity of Benedictine observance may at all times embrace every member of the order' (*op. cit.* p. 320).

(5) So long as the monk remains a member of his own monastic family and a subject of his own abbot (at any rate radically, even if he be living under obedience to another superior for a time), and is living in a monastery in which the

[1] *Ampleforth Journal*, April 1896, p. 248.

conditions of Benedictine cenobitical life obtain, more especially if it be a dependency of the abbey, as a priory; and provided there be no fault on his part that has led to his being sent out of the abbey; it can hardly be said, in face of modern developments, as for instance the congregational system, that there has been any, even theoretical, failure in the matter of stability.

(6) 'Benedictines live in community; where they are found in any other condition it is for a time only, or by dispensation, or by reason of special orders of the Holy See.'[1] Still, it is to be recognised that a call may come to a monk from God, as to St Boniface, who asked to go forth from his monastery to preach the Gospel to the Germans; or a call from superiors to live outside the conditions of cenobitical life, even in permanence, 'for an urgent reason, as the great utility of the monastery or of the Catholic Church.'[2] When such an order comes with proper authority, the responsibility lies on the superior, and the subject is protected by obedience from offending against the vow of stability. What he then owes to stability is, as in the case of Benedictine bishops, the cultivation of the monastic virtues and the maintenance of the interior spirit of his state, coupled with such exterior ordering of his life as is congruous for one who is a monk, and a certain centripetal tendency that makes him habitually gravitate to his monastery as the centre of his life.

## 'CONVERSATIO MORUM SUORUM'

The second thing vowed by Benedictines is 'conversio morum,' conversion of manners or habits. This vow was explained by the presidents in 1907: 'By it the monk binds himself to assiduous and unwearied labour at the reformation of his morals or habits according to evangelical perfection, rejecting what is worldly and directing his actions according to the Rule of St Benedict'; and so it has been understood by all commentators, from Paul Warnefrid, who says: 'Conversio morum is the rooting out of vices and the planting of virtues.' Only when the scientific study of the textual history

[1] Abbot Ford, from a passage to be cited in full in chapter XVIII.
[2] Einsiedeln *Notae*, above.

of the Rule and of the MSS was undertaken in quite recent years, was it recognised that St Benedict's word here is 'conversatio.' 'Conversatio' appeared, either as reading or as variant, in the critical editions from Schmidt's onwards; but I believe I was the first definitely to call attention to the fact that quite certainly it is the genuine word of St Benedict's vow, and to ask what it means. This was in 1907.[1] Abbot Delatte in his Commentary merely mentions the reading, but makes no count of it, and gives the traditional interpretation of 'conversio morum.' Abbot Herwegen, in the tract already mentioned, deals with it; but the one scholar who has so far made a serious effort to cope with the new difficulty is Dom Matthäus Rothenhäusler, of St Joseph's Abbey, Westphalia. Before, however, we consider his solution, let us turn to St Benedict himself.

The passage in the Rule describing the monastic promise is as follows: 'Suscipiendus autem in oratorio coram omnibus promittat de stabilitate sua et conversatione morum suorum et obedientia coram Deo et sanctis ejus, ut si aliquando aliter fecerit, ab eo se damnandum sciat quem irridet' (c. LVIII). That is, he is to make a promise concerning his stability, and 'the conversation of his manners' and obedience. It is not clear that the monk used the definite formula 'promitto de stabilitate mea,' etc.; much less 'promitto stabilitatem meam,' etc. But it was very natural that the promise or vow should take this last form, and so we find it in the earliest professions of the St Gall Book, though in Paul Warnefrid it is still 'de stabilitate.' 'Promitto stabilitatem' and 'promitto obedientiam' are quite simple and presented no difficulty. But though 'promitto de conversatione morum meorum' is susceptible of an intelligible interpretation, 'promitto conversationem morum meorum' was plainly unintelligible and impossible; and this no doubt is the reason why it dropt out of the vow, so that, as has been seen, in profession forms of the eighth and early ninth century only stability and obedience were promised.[2] By a change, frequent in MSS of all authors,

[1] *Journal of Theological Studies*, October, p. 106.

[2] The only instance of 'conversatio' in a profession form is in an Albi fragment of the ninth century, where the profession is framed on the analogy of the baptismal interrogations: 'Promittis de stabilitate tua et conversatione morum tuorum et obedientia coram Deo et sanctis eius? Promitto' (Herwegen, *op. cit.* p. 38).

the similar word 'conversio' came to be substituted for 'conversatio,' and as 'promitto conversionem morum meorum' gave a tolerable meaning, St Benedict's triple form of the vow was gradually restored in this shape in the course of the ninth century, and has so remained ever since. Long familiarity with the traditional exegesis of 'conversio morum' has obscured the fact that the word 'conversio' means a single act or group of acts, usually the turning from paganism to Christianity, or from sin to repentance, or from the world to the monastic life; its application to a lifelong process of self-discipline and religious formation would be an improper use of the word. The two words are constantly confused in the MSS; wherever one occurs the other is usually found as a variant.[1] Cases where 'conversio' appears to mean the same as 'conversatio,' manner of life, or monastic life, must be suspect till recourse has been had to the MSS; e.g. in St Gregory's Dialogues, ii, 6, the ordinary editions have 'Gothus quidam ad conversionem venit,' but the latest edition reads 'conversationem.' Abbot Herwegen cites instances where the distinction between the two words is explicitly drawn: 'Hactenus conversio atque conversatio ejus'; 'sic eum fuisse conversum atque conversatum.'[2]

When we come to consider the meaning of a promise 'de conversatione morum suorum,' we must examine the other cases of the use of 'conversatio' by St Benedict. The word occurs in nine other places in the Rule, six times without variant and thrice with variant 'conversio' found in the later texts, but in all these places 'conversatio' is, from the standpoint of textual criticism, certainly the true reading.[3] Thus St Benedict nowhere uses 'conversio,' though in two places he uses the verb 'converti' in its correct meaning of turning from the world and embracing the monastic life (II, 49; LXIII, 17). In the six places in which 'conversatio' only is found in the MSS, it means either the personal manner of life of the monk, or the manner of life of the community:

processu conversationis et fidei (Prol. 124)
de quorum miserrima conversatione (I, 33)
fratres boni testimonii et sanctae conversationis (XXI, 2)

[1] See numerous cases in Petschenig's Cassian. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 49.
[3] See my edit. of the *Regula*, pp. 140, 141.

lectisternia pro modo conversationis (XXII, 2)
honestatem morum aut initium conversationis (LXXIII, 3)
ad perfectionem conversationis (LXXIII, 5)

In the three places in which 'conversio' is found in inferior MSS, 'conversatio' means simply the monastic life:

(anachoretae) qui non conversationis fervore novitio (I, 5)
noviter veniens quis ad conversationem (LVIII, 1)
ordines suos ita conservent ut conversationis tempus ut vitae meritum discernit (LXIII, 2)

In these three places 'conversio' might have been used in its proper sense of entrance into the monastic state, but the evidence for 'conversatio' is decisive. The most striking of them is LVIII, 1; here we have the analogy of passages from the Rules of Caesarius of Arles and the Dialogues of St Gregory, wherein the ordinary texts have 'ad conversionem venire,' whereas in the best MSS 'ad conversationem venire' is found, as in St Benedict.[1] This meaning of 'conversatio' as the monastic life is common with St Gregory, as 'habitus sanctae conversationis.'[2] So with St Benedict 'conversatio' has its well-recognised meaning of manner of life, or personal behaviour, familiar in the Latin New Testament, as 'ipsi in omni conversatione sancti sitis' (1 Peter i, 15); 'nostra conversatio in caelis est' (Philippians iii, 20).

The expression 'conversatio morum suorum' is difficult. In the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* I find only the following expressions bearing any analogy to it:

conversatio bonorum actuum ($853^{32}$, Cassian, *c. Nest.* v, 1)
conversatio bonorum operum ($853^{31}$)
conversatio peccatorum suorum ($850^{64}$)

When all is said and done, though the sense to be given to 'conversatio morum suorum' may be perceived, the expression remains almost untranslatable: and it may perhaps best be rendered into English 'the conduct of one's life.' And the import of the monk's promise concerning the 'conduct of his life' was that it would be led in accordance with the principles and practices of the monastic life as set forth in the Rule.

Thus the triple promise was to abide in the monastery till death, to live the monastic life according to the Rule, and to be obedient.

[1] See my edit. of the *Regula*, p. 140.

[2] *Dial.* ii, Pref. and frequently.

Having thus tried to determine from the Rule itself the meaning to be attached to 'conversatio morum suorum,' it is right to consider briefly the explanation given by Dom Rothenhäusler.[1] He takes as the starting-point of his investigation the theory of the Three Renunciations of the monastic life, expounded in Cassian's third Conference: the first is the renunciation of external belongings, made once for all; the second is the renunciation of the ways and vices and former affections of soul and flesh; the third is the renunciation by which we detach our mind and heart from present and visible things and contemplate only what is invisible (c. 6). If we turn back to the theory of the spiritual life reproduced from Conference XIV in chapter IV, we shall see that the second renunciation corresponds to what is there called the actual or practical life, the eradication of sins and faults and the cultivation of virtues, and the third to the contemplative life. But it is Cassian's teaching that the contemplative life belongs in its fulness to the hermitage, and that the cenobium is the proper school of the actual life.[2] Thus hermits are said to be those 'who already being perfected in "actual conversation" (sc. in the cenobium) have chosen the secret places of the desert' (Collations, xviii, 4). Here it will be noticed that for 'actualis vita' we have 'actualis conversatio,' and so it is in many places in Cassian (vi, 1; x, 6; xiv, 16). In one place we find as the equivalent of 'actualis vita' or 'conversatio,' 'actualis, id est ethica, disciplina' (xiv, 9). As Cassian here equates 'actualis' and 'ethica,' and frequently uses the term 'conversatio actualis,' it appears that, though he does not ever use the term 'conversatio ethica,' still it is a mere chance that he does not, as it is entirely within the range of his thought and language. But 'conversatio ethica' is the same thing as 'conversatio morum'; and so the vow of 'conversatio morum' is a vow to practise the 'actual life' of self-discipline and tendance to perfection. And so we are back in effect to the traditional explanation of 'conversio morum.'

Such is Dom Rothenhäusler's conclusion. It is very ingenious; and this is where it fails,—it is too ingenious.

[1] *Zur Aufnahmeordnung der Regula S. Benedicti*, part 1 of Heft 3 of the *Beiträgen*, etc., edited by Abbot Herwegen, 1912 (pp. 20-82).

[2] Passages illustrating this have been cited in chapter VIII.

The process of substitutions whereby 'vita actualis' is gradually turned into 'conversatio morum' reminds us somewhat of the manipulation of trigonometrical equations. Moreover, the word 'suorum' seems fatal to the theory. I cannot but think the simpler view set forth above is more consonant with St Benedict's words and thought.

## OBEDIENCE

Whatever discussion there may be as to the meaning of stability and 'conversatio morum,' there can be little in regard to obedience. On this matter St Benedict's teaching is unmistakable and very downright. In c. LVIII he explains as follows the obedience that is vowed: 'If he promise to keep the Rule in all things, and to observe all commandments laid upon him.' In c. V St Benedict's doctrine on obedience is set forth with great clearness. It may be reduced to two elements:

(1) As to theory: 'as if the command came from God';

(2) As to practice: 'without delay.'

These two principles may be abundantly illustrated from the Rule itself and from Cassian.[1] The idea of obedience naturally runs through the entire Rule; there are, however, four aspects of St Benedict's teaching that should be particularly brought out.

(1) *The obedience that is 'sweet to man.'*—'Obedience will be acceptable to God and sweet to man, if what is commanded be done not hesitatingly, nor slowly, nor lukewarmly, nor with a murmur, or an unwilling answer' (c. V). St Benedict, like any superior, knew well the obedience that is 'sweet to man,' and he recognises that the abbot will be drawn to love with a special love the monk who possesses this obedience (c. II, 47). Superiors have the natural tendency to shrink from difficulties and assertions of authority, and to follow the line of least resistance. And so, when there is something unpleasant, something that calls for sacrifice, to be done, they turn naturally to the subject who they know will obey without a word. It may seem that in this way the obedient one is penalised for his virtue; but in reality it is the highest

[1] See my edit. of the *Regula*, pp. 25, 153.

praise of a monk, that he should be the one to whom the abbot turns for obediences that are difficult and crossing to nature.

(2) *Interior obedience.*—Though the vow be satisfied by exterior obedience, the actual doing of the thing commanded, the virtue calls for interior obedience, and this St Benedict demands in a high degree: 'If the disciple obey with bad mind and murmur, not merely by mouth but even in his heart, even if he fulfil the command, it will not be acceptable to God, who looks at his murmuring heart, and for such an act he gets no thanks (gratia); rather, he incurs the penalty of murmurers, unless he make satisfaction and amend' (c. V). It is this that should distinguish religious obedience from military or naval.

(3) *Impossible commands.*—'If anything burdensome or impossible be enjoined, the monk should receive the command quietly; and if he sees that it altogether exceeds his powers, he may patiently and opportunely explain the reason of his inability, but without resisting or contradicting. If after this the superior persists in the command, the subject is to do his best to try to carry it out, trusting to God's help; and he is [not merely to believe, but] to *know* that so it is the best [not only in itself, but the best] for him' (sciat ita sibi expedire) (c. LXVIII).

(4) *Mutual obedience.*—Besides the formal obediences to abbot and subordinate superiors, St Benedict lays down that the monks are to be obedient to one another, complying with mutual requests, and that the young especially are to regard such requests of their elders as true obediences, to be obeyed with all charity and solicitude; and he assures them that this mutual obedience, not covered by the vow, is 'the path of obedience by which they will go to God' (c. LXXI).

It is the temper of obedience, much more than the actual obediences, that is of value. This is the fruit and the outward expression of humbleness of heart and renunciation of self-will; and these two things are what St Benedict relies on principally for the ascetical element in his monks' lives.

There is a point in regard to the Benedictine vow of obedience that calls for comment, viz. the words universally added: 'according to the Rule of St Benedict.' These words occur in Smaragdus' profession form and in the later portion

of the St Gall Profession-Book, so that they have been in use since the middle of the ninth century. Thus what is vowed is 'obedience according to the Rule of St Benedict.' The force of this limitation is discussed by commentators and theologians. Fr Augustine Baker, whose doctrine on obedience is very thorough-going, explains it thus: 'The authority of superiors is not illimited, but confined to certain conditions, as that it must be *iuxta Regulam*, neither besides nor above the Rule, and that their command must be *ad edificationem* and not *ad destructionem*.'[1] This is substantially the teaching of St Bernard:

He who makes profession promises obedience, not of every sort, but determinately 'according to the Rule,' and no other Rule than St Benedict's; so that the superior must limit his commands to what is right, not in general, but according to what St Benedict established. Obedience is promised according to the Rule of St Benedict, not according to the will of the superior. No one should be compelled by obedience to what is beyond the rule he has professed, much less to what is contrary to it. The superior may neither prohibit the subject from what he has vowed, nor exact what he has not vowed. After laying down these limitations to the superior's rights in commanding, and asserting the principle clearly that the subject is not bound by his vow of obedience to more than he has vowed, St Bernard goes on to exhort him, as a counsel of perfection, to obey universally without consideration of such rights (*De Praecepto et Dispensatione*, §§ 10, 11, 12, greatly compressed).

Here we have the simple interpretation of 'obedience according to the Rule,' neither beside, nor beyond, nor against the Rule. It follows that in virtue of ordinary Benedictine obedience a monk cannot be compelled to go on the Foreign Mission to the heathen, or to live in permanence, or quasi-permanence, out of the conditions of cenobitical life, which presupposes a community in which choir, common life, and in some reasonable measure the elements of monastic observance are practised. These principles may be further illustrated from St Bernard:

There are two principal obligations to be observed by us monks, subjection to the abbot and stability in place. But either of these ought not to be fulfilled to the prejudice of the other: thus you should so show yourself stable in place as not to contemn being

[1] *Sancta Sophia*, p. 325.

subject to the abbot, and so obey the abbot submissively as not to lose stability. If you would disapprove of a monk, however constant in place, who contemned obeying the orders of his abbot, can you wonder that we blame an obedience which was to you the cause, or occasion, of leaving your place? Especially as at profession stability is promised without mention of subjection to the abbot. . . . I say that the abbot is to be obeyed in all things, yet saving our profession (vows). But you having made profession according to the Rule of St Benedict, when you promised obedience you promised also stability. How is obedience able to excuse the transgression of stability? One makes one's profession solemnly and regularly in the presence of the abbot,—in his presence only, not at his discretion. He is brought in as the witness, not the arbiter of the profession (*Ep.* vii, *de Discretione Obedientiae*, §§ 15, 16, 17, compressed).

Thus St Bernard holds that obedience should not overrule stability, taken in its primitive sense. It comes to this. Just as there is a difference in conception and in practice between Benedictine poverty and Franciscan poverty (see next chapter), so there is a difference between Benedictine obedience and (say) Jesuit obedience. A man becomes a Jesuit to place himself unreservedly in the hands of his superiors, to be used by them where and when and how they please, and no condition of life or sphere of work is more normal for the Jesuit than another. But in Benedictine life it is otherwise. A man becomes a Benedictine because he feels called to live Benedictine life, which is a definite objective manner of life, laid down and legislated for in St Benedict's Rule. The Rule is cenobitical, contemplating nothing else than common life in community. The obedience vowed is 'according to the Rule.' Consequently normal Benedictine obedience lies within the limits of normal Benedictine cenobitical life; and a Benedictine abbot has not got the power, except in extraordinary circumstances and in virtue of some special provision by the Holy See, of compelling a monk by the obligation of his vow of obedience to live permanently out of the conditions of Benedictine life. Within the limits of the Rule the duty of obedience is without reserve.

NOTE.—A question long mooted among Benedictines falls under the idea of obedience: whether the precepts of the Rule (and of constitutions, etc.) bind in conscience under sin, or are only penal?

To go into the question fully, from the standpoints of history and theology, would call for a chapter; but the outline may be sketched in a note. The first formal discussion, so far as I know, was St Bernard's treatise *de Praecepto et Dispensatione.* Bernard of Monte Cassino's *Speculum Monachorum* (1274) was written in elucidation of the question, and St Thomas devotes to it *Summa* 2-2, clxxxvi, 9, and *Quodlibetales* I, xx. The question that then exercised men's minds was whether *everything* in the Rule binds under mortal sin. Card. Turrecremata, an accomplished theologian and canonist, very clearly sums up these early discussions in Tractates v and vi of his commentary on the Rule. His conclusion is that only those things that are of the substance of the vows, or are of grave obligation by the law of God or of the Church, are binding under mortal sin. The monitions and counsels of the Rule, like those of the Gospel, do not bind under sin at all. Between these lie the precepts, of many different degrees of importance, the transgressions whereof, unless they be duly dispensed, are venial sins in varying grades, according to the nature of the precept and the circumstances of the transgression. He agrees with St Thomas that the Benedictine Rule does bind in conscience. St Thomas notes as a specialty of the Dominican Rule that its precepts do not bind under sin of any kind, unless transgressed by negligence or contempt; and Turrecremata endorses his teaching that in this matter the case of Benedictines is different from that of Dominicans.

There can be no question but that Turrecremata correctly interprets the old-fashioned Benedictine tradition, which was that the Rule binds in conscience in the sort of manner explained by him. In course of time, however, it came to pass that provisions like that of the Dominican Rule were inserted in the Rules of most of the later orders, and, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the constitutions of various Benedictine congregations. And early in the seventeenth the Cistercian theologian Caramuel taught that the Rule has in itself no binding force whatsoever until its prescriptions are personally imposed on the monk by the authority of the abbot. The 'lax' Dom Mège vigorously combated this doctrine. His defence of the old Benedictine view is singularly good, and is the best presentation of the case known to me (*Commentaire*, 34-46).

In our day a clause has been inserted in the declarations and constitutions of divers Benedictine congregations, that the declarations, 'like the precepts of the Rule itself, do not bind under sin, unless they touch the matter of the vows or the laws of the Church, or are violated with contempt or scandal.' This principle was put forward as unquestioned Benedictine doctrine by Abbot Guéranger

(*Notions sur la Vie monastique*, 49) and Abbot Wolter (*Elementa*, 5); they both invoke St Thomas, but this, as has been shown, is invalid. Other constitutions are silent on the matter, or leave it vague: thus the 'Notae' of the Swiss Congregation merely say that the view of those is not to be accepted who maintain that all regulations whatsoever, even the very smallest, are binding under venial sin (p. 46); on the other hand, the old constitutions of the English Congregation declared that only those constitutions to which was attached the sanction 'in virtue of holy obedience' were binding under mortal sin, saying nothing about the others, or about the prescriptions of the Rule.

Abbot Delatte's few words on the subject are much to be commended; he deprecates the whole controversy: St Benedict and his monks were not casuists and probably never dreamt that the question would arise. The Rule is something else than a series of facultative counsels of perfection, or police regulations, or a system of personal amends for transgressions. The abbot is not a prefect of discipline. Practically, whatever may be the obligation of the Rule in itself, there are few infractions of it that do not entail theological fault in virtue of some malice in the motive—laziness, pride, contempt, negligence, gluttony—or scandal and bad example and the relaxing of discipline (*Commentaire*, 446). He evidently likes best the older view.

When both sides have made their mutual explanations: when on the one hand (as in the declarations of one congregation) the monks are warned that, 'notwithstanding the aforesaid clause,' 'these precepts can hardly ever be violated without some fault'; and on the other, it is explained that the sins involved in violating them shade away from definite venial sins to imperfections and those failures to attain to the highest ideals of conduct that make up the bulk of the confessions of the devout: it appears that in the concrete there is little real difference between the two views. But, there is a difference of attitude towards the Holy Rule, and of outlook, that does matter, because it colours the monk's life.

Finally, if it be asked: does the Rule itself throw any light on St Benedict's mind on the point? there is a text which I have not ever seen brought to bear in any of the discussions. In the passage at the end of c. v, cited above (p. 140), he says that an obedience done with even internal murmuring will get no reward from God, but rather punishment. But punishment at God's hands implies fault, sin of some kind. And it will not be questioned that to disobey outright is worse than to obey with murmuring mind. A distinction will hardly be drawn between the commands laid on a

monk personally by the abbot's voice and those laid on him impersonally by a rule. And so we seem to see that according to St Benedict's mind the precepts of the Rule, and the similar ones of declarations, etc., do bind in conscience, in the manner explained above.

The first witness known to me of the Benedictine tradition is Paul Warnefrid. In his commentary (775), in discussing the question whether the flesh of fowls may be eaten, he argues thus: 'If it is allowed by the Rule, will you sin by not eating it? No. If it is forbidden, will you sin by eating it? Yes. Therefore, choose the safe side, and do not eat it' (c. XXXVI). Whatever be thought of his theology, his belief is clear that the precepts of the Rule are binding in conscience.

# CHAPTER X

## BENEDICTINE POVERTY

THE title of this chapter may provoke an incredulous smile—Franciscan poverty, yes; St Francis' theory of poverty is well known and understood, and the actual poverty of Franciscan life is an evident fact that appeals to all. But Benedictine poverty! There is a kind of challenge in the words. Yet the Capuchin Father Cuthbert, the author of beyond all compare the best modern life of St Francis, says: 'Much as the Franciscan delights to honour poverty, it would be totally opposed to his spirit to deny a sanctity to the use of wealth. In the right use of property as a trust for the common welfare, a use so admirably consecrated by the great Benedictine order, he sees a spirit kindred to his own Lady Poverty; and, taking the world as it is, he recognises that Christian society needs the co-operation of both spirits.'[1] However, the right use of wealth is a different thing from religious poverty, and we must consider Benedictine poverty both in the personal and in the corporate aspect. Though he does not make poverty one of the vows, it is certainly one of St Benedict's central ideas. Moreover, Benedictines are held to take the vow of poverty implicitly, and are bound by the same laws and obligations as are those religious that take it explicitly.

## PERSONAL POVERTY

St Benedict was absolutely uncompromising in the matter of personal poverty, that no monk may have anything of his own. At profession he must either distribute to the poor, or else by formal donation make over to the monastery, whatever he may possess, reserving nothing at all for himself (c. LVIII). St Benedict speaks with quite unwonted vehemence on the

[1] *St Francis and Poverty*, p. 79.

subject of 'propriety,' private ownership;[1] twice he calls it 'a vice to be cut out by the roots' (cc. XXXIII, LV); once he terms it 'nequissimum vitium' (c. XXXIII). This language, at first sight disproportionate, is accounted for by the great importance St Benedict attached to the enforcement of the principle that his monks are to possess nothing as their own, not even the things assigned to them for their personal use, but that all things are to be held in common; and by his knowledge of the practical difficulty in maintaining the idea in fact. Monastic literature from the beginning abounds in passages that show the ineradicable tendency to accumulate belongings and to treat them as our own. Thus Cassian, speaking of the monks of southern Gaul, laments: 'What shall we wretched creatures say who though living in monasteries and established under the government and care of an abbot, yet carry about our own keys, and trampling under foot all feeling of shame which should spring from our profession, are not ashamed actually to wear openly on our fingers rings with which to seal what we have stored up; and for whom not merely boxes and baskets, but not even chests and closets are sufficient for those things which we collect, or which we reserved when we forsook the world; and who sometimes get so angry over trifles, which we lay claim to as if they were our own, that if any one dares lay a finger on any of them, we cannot keep the wrath of our heart from being expressed on our lips' (Institutes, iv, 15).

So was it in the beginning of monasticism, and so will it be to the end; so ingrained in human nature is the desire of acquiring and possessing.

In treating of monastic or religious poverty it is necessary to distinguish the Principle of poverty, the Spirit of poverty, and the Practice of poverty.

The *principle* is that laid down so clearly by St Benedict in c. XXXIII, that the monk may *possess* nothing—nothing whatsoever,—may look on nothing as his own, but must always recognise that whatever he may have for his personal use is all the common property of the community; and that he must not have anything at all except what the abbot has given him or permitted him to have. In the English

[1] St Benedict's words are 'proprium habere' (c. XXXIII, 4) and 'opus peculiare' (c. LV, 34), the latter taken from Cassian.

Congregation there is a practice, handed down from the days of its restoration at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which I believe does not commonly obtain in other Benedictine congregations, even the reformed; I have found it elsewhere only in the Austrian constitutions. During Lent each monk has to draw up a 'Memoriale Paupertatis,' Poverty Bill, being an accurate list of everything that he has for his use in any way, either in his cell or elsewhere; and when he presents it to the abbot he says: 'These things and whatever I may have forgotten, together with myself, I resign to your paternal good-will and pleasure.' This practice of a yearly solemn explicit recognition of the ground principle of monastic poverty is surely a good custom and a valuable practical way of keeping alive the idea on which St Benedict sets such store, and which is so likely to be lost sight of. So much for the principle of personal poverty among Benedictines: among Franciscans even the principle would, I take it, be different.

We come now to the *spirit* of Benedictine poverty. The principle just laid down is a matter of mental attitude, a way of looking at things, and this principle might remain quite intact even though the monks lived in the midst of riches and luxury. The principle is saved provided that the individual monk knows he is not the owner of the things he has, and that he has nothing for which the abbot has not given permission. But the abbot might give permission for anything: for a suite of apartments, for luxurious furniture, for jewelry, for a motor car, for considerable supplies of money. The abbot no doubt would sin gravely in allowing such things, and the monk in receiving them. But the sin would be against the spirit and the virtue of poverty, and against the religious state; and not against the principle, or even the vow, because in all this there need be no private ownership.

When we come to determine the spirit of Benedictine poverty, we are in a difficulty: it is always difficult to define a spirit. St Benedict lays down, on the one hand, that the monks are to look to the abbot for all that is necessary (c. XXXIII), and on the other, that the abbot is to give all that is necessary, so that there may be no excuse for any one having anything more than he has received from the abbot

(c. LV); and anything beyond what is necessary is superfluous and is to be cut off (c. LV). He gives us in this same chapter his idea of what was the necessary outfit of a monk: cowl or cloak, tunic, socks, shoes, belt, knife, writing-style and tablets, needle, handkerchief. Earlier in the chapter he mentions a scapular or working apron, and says each monk should have two cowls (for winter and summer) and two tunics (one for night use).

'Necessity' is a relative term, and evidently does not mean with St Benedict the bare necessities of life, but what is reasonably required by the monks. This will vary according to climate, as St Benedict recognises; and also according to times and altered conditions of life, resulting from differences in civilisation, education, and upbringing. St Benedict to a great extent had in mind Italian peasants in the sixth century, and to such his outfit would no doubt have appeared ample. To form an accurate estimate it would be necessary to know the social and domestic conditions of life in the working and lower middle classes in central Italy in his time. We can only say that without any doubt he intended the abbot to use the same kind of discretion in regard to clothes and the other articles given to the monks for their personal use as we shall see (chapter XIV) he was to use in regard to food, and to hours and to work, and to everything else in the life, and that his guiding principle here, as in all else, should be frugality, 'servata parcitate' (c. XXXIX). For instance, in the matter of bedding, St Benedict lays down that it is to be according to the dispensation of the abbot and proportionate to the manner of life, 'pro modo conversationis' (c. XXII).

The late Bishop Augustine O'Neill, a monk of St Edmund's of the English Congregation, while master of the juniors or clerics at St Michael's, Belmont, gave the retreat to the juniors, among whom I was, and I remember well his conference on poverty, which still, after forty years, seems to me the most illuminating utterance I have met on the spirit of Benedictine poverty. 'The religious life,' he said, 'is the imitation of Christ, and therefore religious poverty is the imitation of Christ's poverty. But Christ's poverty was different in kind in different phases of His life: there was the utter destitution of Calvary; there was the poverty almost as

great of Bethlehem; there was the poverty of the public life, when at times He had not where to lay His head; and there was also the poverty of Nazareth. Calvary is the type of Franciscan poverty;[1] but Nazareth is the type of Benedictine poverty. It was not the poverty of beggary, but the poverty that obtains in the household of a carpenter or other skilled artisan. It is simplicity and frugality, rather than want; and this is the spirit of Benedictine poverty and the type for Benedictines to set before themselves—the poverty of a workman's home, who is earning good wages.' From this we obtain the working principle, that the spirit of poverty demands that in a Benedictine monastery the conditions of life in regard to food, clothing, furniture, and the personal comforts of life, ought to be on a distinctly simpler and more frugal scale than the majority of the monks would have had if they had remained in the world.

The *practice* of Benedictine poverty is only the spirit translated into action. This realisation of the spirit of poverty must be the joint work of abbot and monks. He is the custodian of the poverty of the community, but the monks must each one co-operate, by forming to himself a just idea of what Benedictine poverty implies in view of the circumstances of the community, and by carrying it out in his own life and practice. The abbot's ultimate responsibility does not absolve the individual monks from their share of responsibility for the religious poverty of the house. A monk should not rest satisfied simply with having obtained the abbot's permission; he should satisfy himself that the permission was one he was justified in asking for. He must not ask the abbot's permission for things incongruous or superfluous, and he must not accumulate or hoard up things unnecessary. Hoarding, 'collecting,' is one of the instincts of the human heart hardly less than acquiring.

The trouble is to form a just idea of what is reasonably 'necessary.' We have seen St Benedict's own standard. But it was for Italian peasants, who formed the bulk of the community, though it comprised some of other classes. Benedic-

[1] 'Mary thy Mother stopped at the foot of the Cross, but Poverty mounted it with Thee and clasped Thee in her embrace until the end. O poorest Jesus, bestow on me the treasure of the highest Poverty' (St Francis).

tines are no longer peasants or agricultural labourers. The fact that they are priests, that they have to go through a course of ecclesiastical studies, that their work is mostly intellectual, that they are largely devoted to educational work and to administering the sacraments, that they are predominantly recruited from the upper and middle classes, and hardly at all from the working-class—all this makes a difference, and must be taken into account. Also, it surely makes a difference that we are in the twentieth century not in the sixth, and that the scale of living has altered so enormously for all classes. Account of the civilisation of the present day must be taken if we are to preserve the due proportion of St Benedict's list of the monk's outfit in translating it into the terms of modern life.[1]

This same c. LV sheds further light on St Benedict's mind in the matter of the practice of personal poverty. He directs that when the monks receive new clothes, the old ones are to be put away for the poor; thus it would not be a virtue for a Benedictine to go on wearing his clothes till they were so patched and threadbare as to be utterly worn out. This, as I understand, would be a virtue in St Francis' eyes; but St Benedict wished his monks to keep themselves better dressed, and to give up their old clothes while they still have enough wear in them to be worth giving to the poor. The contrast between St Benedict's ideas and those of the Egyptian Fathers in the matter of clothing and bedding has been brought out in chapter IV.

Akin to this, and in further illustration of St Benedict's mind, is the injunction that those who go out of the monastery precincts on a journey are to wear better tunic and cloak (cowl) than in the monastery, and also are to wear breeches or drawers (c. LV). Thus it was not St Benedict's practice for the monks to go on a journey dressed just as in the monastery. It may be questioned whether their attire when abroad differed very notably, certainly not aggressively, from that of ecclesiastics or even lay folk. Here may aptly be cited a principle laid down by Cassian. After describing the garments of the Egyptian monks he goes on to say: 'In Gaul we need only

[1] For instance, it may fairly be held that the twentieth-century translation of St Benedict's writing-style and tablets is 'type-writer.'

keep to those which the situation of the place and the customs of the district permit. For the severity of the winter does not allow us to be satisfied with slippers or linen tunics or a single frock; and the covering of tiny hoods or the wearing of a sheepskin would afford a subject of derision instead of edifying the spectators. Wherefore we hold that we ought to introduce only those things which are adapted to the humble character of our profession and the nature of the climate, so that the chief thing about our dress may be not the novelty of the garb, which might give some offence to men of the world, but its honourable simplicity' (Institutes, i, 10).[1]

From all that has been said, it becomes clear that any kind of emulation of Franciscan poverty would be a misconception among Benedictines. It is not the case that Benedictine and Franciscan poverty are different degrees of religious poverty; they are different kinds of poverty resulting from the different ideals of the two patriarchs, and each kind is the best adapted for the purposes of the respective institutes. The calls are different; and for Benedictines to emulate the poverty and nakedness so admirable in Franciscans would not be admirable but fanatical. Benedictine virtue in this, as in most other things, consists in that keeping of the happy mean between rigorism and laxity that is the perennial problem of Black Benedictinism. If the tendency to accumulate belongings is natural to man, so also the opposite tendency to divest oneself of all things and denude oneself has always been one of the natural manifestations of the spirit of asceticism, in which, as in its other manifestations, Benedictines must guard against excess if they will be faithful to St Benedict's spirit.

St Benedict prescribes that the clothes are to be of cheap and common material (c. LV). Luxury, superfluity, undue comfort, worldly elegance, curiosity in apparel, in furniture, in the surroundings of life, must always be guarded against. The monk's person and his cell should bespeak one who is pledged by vow, if not to a life of want, certainly to the simple life; if not to a life of penance, certainly to one of self-denial.

While on the subject of personal poverty it is hardly possible to avoid a word on the use of money. In the case of Benedictines there has never been, as in the case of Fran-

[1] In Petschenig, not in Gazet: but certainly genuine.

ciscans, any question as to the lawfulness of handling money when necessary, as on a journey. Here the law of poverty is observed by the proper permissions being obtained, by a conscientious use being made of the money, and by an account of receipts and expenses being rendered to the superior. Similarly those entrusted with administrations, as the cellarer of the monastery and often other officials, or those in charge of cells or other dependencies of the monastery, must deal with money with considerable freedom. But it is all under the abbot's general control, regulated by rule, and an account has to be rendered to him yearly or otherwise by the administrator, who acts as an agent, not as owner. Under existing conditions of society and civilisation it is in practice necessary that religious stationed, for whatever reason, outside of a monastery and out of the conditions of full conventual life, must have some kind of allowances for their personal expenses: and if a monk is living, even in a monastery, in a large city, he cannot go about without some money in his pocket for tramcar and underground railway fares, and he cannot be asking for a few pence every time he goes out. If the permission of the superior be obtained, St Benedict's principle of poverty is maintained; the practice of poverty will depend on the way in which the money is used. Still, it has to be recognised that the mere holding of money is in itself against the mind of St Benedict and against the mind of the Church for all religious. The system of allowances, 'peculium' is the technical name, is tolerated under certain circumstances, but with very definite limitations and safeguards. But without any doubt what St Benedict intended and what the Church has always desired to secure, and very markedly at the Council of Trent, is what is called 'the perfect common life' (vita perfecte communis). What this is can hardly be better explained than in the declarations of the English Congregation: they lay down that the provisions of c. XXXIII of the Rule are to be observed to the letter; in the abbeys and in priories of six, the monks are bound to strict common life; no one is to keep money in his own possession, but must hand it over to the superior within twenty-four hours; no one may spend anything or give any present without permission; whatever the monk acquires in any way—'industrialia,' 'parcimonialia,' 'honoraria,' salaries,

pensions, presents, legacies—all must be handed over to the superior for the use of the community, and incorporated (confundantur) with the general funds of the monastery.[1]

There is yet another very practical way in which monks have to exercise poverty, the manner in which they treat the property of the monastery, and the clothes and other things assigned to them for their personal use. St Benedict's words on this subject are striking: he says that the cellarer is to look on the utensils and all the property of the monastery as if they were the sacred vessels of the altar (c. XXXI). This was the idea of the older monachism represented by St Basil and Cassian, that everything in the monastery, no less than the monks themselves, is consecrated to God.[2] The abbot and the cellarer are to keep inventories of all the things given out for common use, and any one who treats the things of the monastery in a slovenly or careless way is to be punished (cc. XXXII, XXXV). This way of exercising the spirit of poverty is equally binding on the monk whether the monastery be poor or rich, for it is not primarily a point of economy but of self-discipline. Any kind of wastefulness, any lack of sense of responsibility in expenditure, is the negation of the virtue of poverty. Such possible lessening of the sense of responsibility in matter of money is the weak side of the religious life. By the vow of poverty religious place themselves outside of the ordinary battle of life. They know that whatever befalls, they will never lack the necessaries of life—food, clothing, lodging. They may be sick and invalided; they may be idle; they may be rebellious, unconscionable;[3] they may fail altogether to comply with the duties and ideas of their state: but they know they will never be within the grip of want. Thus they are without those compelling natural incentives that make men work, that compel them to stick steadfastly to duty, brace them up to battle through difficulties and troubles, and keep them faithful. If the vow of poverty means only emancipation from the common discipline of life, it is a bad thing; a weakness, not a strength. The only purpose, the only justification of the exemption of the religious from the great anxieties and sorrows of life, is that he may be

[1] Decl. 40, 41, 42. [2] My edit. of the *Regula*, p. 62.
[3] *Regula*, c. xxiii.

more free to be 'careful of the things of the Lord'; and for him the everyday things are the things of the Lord. If he do not use in this way his freedom from solicitude about the things of the world, better far he should have been as the rest of men. It is presuming on the vow of poverty for a religious to act in a way in which a man of the world could not act without risking his means of livelihood. Whenever a religious has to acknowledge to himself, 'I could not have acted so were I not a religious,' it should be to him the occasion of a serious searching of heart.

## CORPORATE POVERTY

St Benedict took for granted that his monasteries would possess property corporately; this appears quite explicitly in cc. LVIII (*fin.*) and LIX of the Rule. Whether he contemplated his monasteries acquiring great wealth, it is impossible to say; probably it did not enter his mind. But this did in time come about, and inevitably. The mere fact of a body of men working without personal remuneration, living frugally, and pooling their earnings, would of itself in time accumulate wealth. Then came the flood of gifts of all sorts that are constantly made to a permanent community. As a matter of fact, history attests that the great Benedictine abbeys in all lands were rich, and very rich. As Lord Acton puts it: 'The Benedictines, the real inheritors of the old monastic and ascetic spirit, growing with the growth of christendom, became wealthy and politically powerful.'[1] And so, in a chapter on 'Benedictine Poverty,' it is necessary to consider the question of monastic wealth.

There is certainly one matter on which Black Monks have never hesitated even to lavish wealth. As far back as there are records that can be relied on, as far back certainly as the Carolingian Revival, and further back to St Benedict Biscop at Wearmouth, the Benedictines have always striven to build great and splendid churches, and to provide all that is most costly for the service of God—chalices, vestments, missals in bindings of silver or gold set with precious stones, reliquaries, everything that can enhance the external majesty and pomp

[1] *Lord Acton and his Circle*, p. 258.

of divine worship. This needs no enforcing; the marvellous church of Cluny is but the most conspicuous example.[1] This spirit is the expression of the religious sense that desires to give to God the very best it can, and profusely—the richest material joined to the most perfect art and the most exquisite workmanship. This is the universal normal tendency of the religious sense of mankind, manifested throughout all ages, and among all peoples, and in all religions. And the Catholic Church in encouraging this natural instinct of man has only acted with her usual wisdom in that she takes man as God has made him, of body as well as soul, and tries to use and elevate his senses and make them the means of helping him to serve God better. So that the Black Benedictines in this have only done as the Catholic Church has ever done.

But there is another spirit, another idea, in regard to the divine worship; the spirit which insists that God is a Spirit, and that He should be worshipped in spirit, and that external richness and pomp and ceremonial are a misconception, at any rate a concession to human weakness, and that spiritually-minded men should be able to do without such helps. This of course is the spirit of Puritanism. In England we connect the name with the iconoclastic excesses of Reformers and Ironsides and Covenanters; but Puritanism is in itself a highly respectable thing, standing, perhaps with exaggeration, for the great truth that religion in its essence is a personal and spiritual thing. It would be easy to name Catholic saints who have joined in the protest for simplicity in the externals of divine worship. This was the early Cistercian spirit, though such ruins as Tintern and Rievaulx and many another show that it did not long survive in its rigour; and it is the Trappist spirit to-day. But the Black Monk spirit has always been the other. Which is the better? Why ask? Both are true: *Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum!*

Again, not only the church but the monastic buildings have always tended to become spacious and massive and often beautiful blocks of building, at times attaining to palatial dimensions, as the great abbey of St Vedast at Arras, which so impressed the Maurist literary voyagers in 1718.[2] This pro-

[1] See Duckett, *Charters and Records of Cluny*, i, 12-24.

[2] Second *Voyage Littéraire*, pp. 62-72: 'Tout y est grand et magnifique'—church, monastery, library, treasury, bells.

cess seems inevitable in the case of a community with money to spend. And provided the personal accommodation of the individual monks, the private cells, are kept in due simplicity, there does not seem to be any infraction of Benedictine poverty in the fact of refectory and public rooms, above all the library, being on a large and ample scale. Benedictines have never had any scruple about the three elementary luxuries, light, space, air. And when a monastery, as is still the case with some of the great abbeys, has had an unbroken existence for a thousand years, it is inevitable that it will gradually come to possess treasures of all kinds, manuscripts, books, pictures, objects of art, even furniture, the gradual accumulation of centuries, which now are of great and even priceless value.

That a keen appreciation of community possession is compatible with the spirit of personal poverty is shown by the following passage of Cassian: 'Though the cenobite believes that the whole granary of the monastery forms his substance, and, as lord of all, devotes his whole care and energy to it all, yet nevertheless, in order to maintain that excellent state of want and poverty which he has secured and which he strives to preserve till the very last in unbroken perfection, he considers himself an alumnus of the monastery and a servant, instead of imagining that he is lord and master of anything' (Institutes, iv, 14).

Any judgement on the question of monastic wealth must depend on the answers to be given to the following two questions:

(1) Did the monks on the whole make a good use of their wealth for the welfare of society?

(2) Did they allow it to mar the simplicity of their monastic life?

An historical survey with a view of answering the first would be quite out of place. But it may safely be said that, on the whole and predominantly, the verdict of history will bear out the favourable judgement of the Capuchin writer cited at the beginning of this chapter. Only one other witness will be called, one who knew the Middle Ages well. Viollet-le-Duc asks: 'Will those who reproach the Benedictines with their immense riches, their preponderance, their spirit of

propaganda, and the enormous power they had been able to acquire, ask themselves if these earthly and intellectual goods could, in those days, have been placed more usefully for humanity in any other hands?' His own answer is that they could not.[1]

The answer to the second question cannot be so clear. There is only too good reason for fearing that the almost inevitable tendency of riches to promote a scale of living too much filled with minor luxuries and little in keeping with any monastic ideal, has not always successfully been kept out of the Benedictine abbeys. After all allowances have been made for reforming party spirit and exaggeration in St Bernard's complaints as to Cluniac life, we can hardly resist the conclusion that in diet and clothing and the general conditions of life the monks of the great abbey had fallen below any possible standard of the simple life. And such things have happened elsewhere too. There have been at all times efforts, successful efforts, to counteract such worldly tendencies and to maintain intact the religious character of the monasteries. The danger of wealth for religious houses is the obvious point of view, and has become one of the commonplaces of history, being generalised and exaggerated out of all proportion to the realities. The following words of so careful a reader of monastic history as Dom Morin deserve consideration: 'It has often been said that relaxation came into our abbeys as the result of riches. This was the case sometimes; but as a general rule, history has proved that monastic communities have never been more fervent within, or beneficent without, than when at the zenith of their power and riches. Every period of relaxation, on the contrary, coincides with a lessening of material resources, with wastefulness, and alienation of all kinds; and every time that a great reformer has been raised up by God, however detached from worldly considerations he may himself have been, he has made it his first care to re-establish the monastery in all its ancient rights. His zeal in this respect may have surprised us, but he knew better than we the spiritual advantages resulting from the good ordering of temporal affairs.'[2]

[1] *Dictionnaire de l'Architecture*, art. 'Architecture Monastique,' i, 252.
[2] *L'Idéal Monastique*, c. ix.

In fact, it seems to be in the enthusiasms of new beginnings that great poverty has been a spiritual blessing in Benedictine history. Ordinarily, a certain careful ease in temporalities, along with certain amenities of life, appears to be the healthiest state for Benedictine monasteries. Still, it has to be recognised that great wealth is a menace to their monastic spirit and life, as it has so often proved a provocation to civil rulers to destroy and plunder. If Benedictines have their truest interests, spiritual and temporal, at heart, they will make their own Solomon's prayer: 'Divitias et paupertatem ne dederis mihi: sed tantum victui meo tribue necessaria.'[1]

This seems to express St Benedict's mind. In the title and throughout the chapter the term 'Benedictine Poverty' has been freely used. Yet it is not St Benedict's; he never speaks of 'monastic poverty'; the word 'paupertas' occurs only once in the Rule, and then of a case regarded as abnormal, a monastery so poor that the monks should have themselves to gather in the harvest (c. XLVIII). He never employs the word 'poor' of his monks, herein in striking contrast to St Francis; with St Benedict the 'pauperes' are always God's poor, the recipients of the good works of the monks. Though in the cave of Subiaco he had practised the extremes of poverty, the ideal held up by St Benedict is not 'poverty,' it is 'parcitas,' frugality, sparingness (c. XXXIX), an ideal in conformity with the whole tenor of the Rule, and illustrated by his attitude to every phase of the ascetic side of the life. 'If thou truly all things for God forsake,' says Richard Rolle, the fourteenth-century English mystic, 'see more what thou despisest than what thou forsakest.'

[1] Prov. xxx, 8, as in Breviary.

# CHAPTER XI

## ST BENEDICT'S RULE

THE foregoing chapters, from the fourth onward, have dealt with the various aspects of the personal religious life of the monks; and those that follow will deal with the more external side, the corporate life, government, and works of the Benedictines. It seems that this is a suitable place wherein to intercalate a chapter on the Rule itself. The whole book, indeed, is on the Rule; but what here follows will be of the nature of an Introduction, treating of such matters as authenticity, sources, text, editions, commentaries, and so forth. It is an advantage that these subjects have been, in some measure, dealt with in recent times by three scholars of high standing, non-Benedictine, non-Catholic; Dr Georg Grützmacher, professor of Ecclesiastical History at Heidelberg,[1] Dr Eduard Wölfflin, one of the leading Latin philologists of modern times,[2] and Dr Ludwig Traube, probably unrivalled as a Latin paleographer and historian of the Carolingian epoch.[3]

### AUTHENTICITY

St Benedict's authorship of the Rule has never been disputed, except by the famous French Jesuit, Père Hardouin, one of the most learned scholars of the seventeenth century, but also 'the most paradoxical of men';[4] the editor of the Councils in twelve great folio volumes, who pronounced their Acts all apocryphal, and maintained that the Aeneid of Virgil

[1] *Die Bedeutung Benedikts von Nursia und seiner Regel in der Geschichte des Mönchtums* (Berlin 1892).

[2] *Benedict von Nursia und seine Mönchsregel* (Munich 1895).

[3] Traube's work will be named in the section on 'Text.'

[4] 'Paradoxotatus hominum, docte febricitans,' etc.; from an epitaph composed as a *jeu d'esprit* by a contemporary scholar, quoted in the Biographical Dictionaries.

is an allegory of St Peter's journey to Rome by a thirteenth-century monk. His literary scepticism was so universal and so fantastic that his questioning of the authenticity of the Rule, and even of St Benedict's existence, may be left to repose among the curiosities of the history of literature.[1]

Hardly more sensible was an opinion of Oudin, who, while not desiring to deprive St Benedict wholly of his Rule, argues from the fact of the first person plural being employed throughout that it was not the personal composition of St Benedict, but a joint production of himself and his monks.[2]

Grützmacher tests the evidence by the methods of modern criticism. He finds that the Rule existed in its present shape certainly as early as 620, when it was incorporated by one Donatus in a Rule which he composed. This was only a few years after St Gregory, whose testimony is well known: St Benedict 'scripsit monachorum Regulam discretione praecipuam sermone luculentam' (Dialogues, ii, 36); and he speaks of it as a well-known book, easily accessible, which any one who wishes can read. Grützmacher concludes that there is no reason for questioning that the Rule we have was the one written by St Benedict.[3]

## PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING

When we come to inquire the place and the date of the writing of the Rule, we meet an old-standing rivalry between Subiaco and Monte Cassino, each claiming to be the birthplace. As a matter of fact, it is capable of proof that the Rule was written at Monte Cassino. In c. LXV it is enjoined with much emphasis that the praepositus or second in command (later called 'claustral prior'), if there be one, is to be appointed by the abbot, and not by the bishop (sacerdos) or abbots who may have appointed the abbot himself, for from this latter system arise rivalries and grave disorders, as St Benedict had himself learned by experience. Now it is worthy of note that St Gregory, speaking of the foundation made from Monte Cassino at Terracina, says that St Benedict appointed not only the abbot but also the second in command (Dialogues, ii, 22), the

[1] It is of interest to note that Hardouin's treatment of St Benedict is exactly the same as Weingarten's treatment of St Anthony.

[2] *De Scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, i, 1414. [3] *Op. cit.* § 4.

very thing which he lays down in c. LXV may on no account be done. Whence it follows that this chapter of the Rule was written after the Terracina foundation, and therefore at Monte Cassino, as St Benedict would not have acted counter to his own very solemn warning. If it be thought that this is pressing, as perhaps it is, St Gregory's words unduly, it is certainly valid to say that the whole tenor of the Rule corresponds to the conditions of Monte Cassino, and not to those of Subiaco, where there were twelve small monasteries with twelve monks in each, all the monasteries being subject to the central authority and control of St Benedict; whereas the Rule contemplates a large community numbering monks by tens and twenties (cc. XXI, XXII), and there is no suggestion of more monasteries than one as under the abbot's charge. It must be accepted, then, that the Rule was written at Monte Cassino, and towards the end of St Benedict's life, when he had reached the full maturity of his spiritual wisdom and experience in government.

## ORIGINALITY

The first systematic attempt to indicate the 'sources' of the Rule was made in my 'Editio critico-practica' (1912). It had, of course, been recognised in general that St Benedict was much beholden to Cassian, and some pieces from the Rules of Pachomius and others had been cited in the commentaries. But what was done was but fragmentary, and the passages had not been seriously sought out and exhibited in connexion with the text. One result of deficient knowledge was that a very exaggerated idea prevailed concerning St Benedict's indebtedness to the earlier monastic literature, and his Rule was even said to be hardly more than a mosaic pieced together from Cassian and the earlier Rules. It is only necessary to turn over the pages of my edition to see how far this is from the facts. Only three passages, the central portion and the end of c. VII and the opening of c. XLIX, can be called extracts from other writers in any true sense. For the rest, the pieces of the Rule that have been shown to depend on earlier material are so casual and trifling,—a sentence here, a phrase there,—that they are negligible, and in no way detract from the originality of St Benedict's work.

In regard to c. IV, the 'Instruments of Good Works,' it is

necessary to say a word. There has long been an idea that St Benedict incorporated in his Rule an earlier list of spiritual and moral precepts. In former days it used to be supposed that his source was the Letter of Clement to James prefixed to the False Decretals of Isidore Mercator. In our own day a number of scholars have put forward various theories as to possible (and impossible) sources of the Instruments. I have elsewhere gone into this matter fully and tested all these theories, and shown that they are found wanting. Only in nine cases, apart from biblical texts, which occur mostly at the beginning, have I been able to find pieces that can with any show of reason be regarded as the source of any of the Instruments. The idea, entertained in many quarters, that this chapter was a pre-existing document adopted by St Benedict is at present a mere theory devoid of evidence; so far no document has been produced that can be accepted as the source of any substantive portion of St Benedict's chapter.[1]

So much on the material originality of the Rule; as to what may be called its formal originality, some writers seem to depreciate this unduly, denying that it really differed very much from the other rules current at the time. This is the position of Grützmacher. He questions whether there was in it anything creative or 'epoch-making,' and holds that it was merely one of the rules of the time; that it just caught and fixed tendencies general in Western monasticism, to be discerned also in the Rules of Caesarius of Arles; and that it owed its success not to any intrinsic merits as compared with other rules, but only to the fact that it was approved and promoted by Gregory the Great and other popes.[2] This surely is a superficial judgement: with it may be contrasted those of Hannay and Workman, in their books many times cited already.[3] The real answer would be an invitation to read the earlier rules. Some are mere lists of 'by-laws'—the Rule of Pachomius is little more than a monastic 'Don't'; others are

[1] See my articles in *Journal of Theological Studies*, January 1910 and January 1911. In particular it is there shown that the negative form of the Golden Rule was in general currency, and its use by St Benedict is no indication of dependence on the 'Didache' or 'Didascalia.'

[2] *Op. cit.* § 11.

[3] Hannay, *Christian Monasticism*, pp. 220-4; Workman, *Monastic Ideal*, pp. 145-50.

collections of spiritual maxims; most are the briefest statements of practical details. Caesarius' Rule for monks, which Grützmacher confronts with St Benedict's as its parallel, fills only three columns of Migne. Not one of these rules was in a real sense a rule of life at all; not one of them was an ordered and practical code of laws regulating the working of a monastery: and this St Benedict's Rule pre-eminently was. In a word, St Benedict's was emphatically *legislation*, as not one of its predecessors could claim to be; and without any doubt it owed this character to the Roman mind and spirit of its framer. 'A monument of legislative art,' is Dudden's estimate, 'remarkable alike for its completeness, its simplicity, and its adaptability' (*Gregory the Great*, i, 115).

Moreover, an exposition of principles pervades it, such as is almost wholly absent from the others. In them we look in vain for anything like St Benedict's great chapters on 'the Abbot,' wherein he lays down his ideas on the manner and method of government, chapters that have won the admiration of some of the great rulers of men. Quite lately I received from a man of affairs, holding a prominent position in public life, a letter saying: 'In the affairs of life I have found more help in the Rule, the constitution, and the lives of St Benedict's sons than elsewhere.' We cannot imagine this being said of any other of the early monastic rules.

Of course the Rule did not spring forth, brand new, a fresh creation from St Benedict's mind. It had its roots in the past, and its author took over his fundamental ideas from his great predecessors, Pachomius, Basil, and Cassian; and moreover he was alive to current tendencies, as also to new conditions and needs. But this does not detract from originality, otherwise were there few original works in the world. The new elements put into his Rule by St Benedict, and the new combinations of older elements, form a good title to the claim of originality. The common verdict of history is justified by the facts: the Rule *was* 'epoch-making' for monachism in the West.

## SOURCES

The sources of the Rule fall under two categories, monastic and general. And here I refer once for all to the 'Index

Scriptorum' in my edition, whereby what is here set forth may be controlled and supplemented.

Among the monastic sources the first place is held by Cassian, to whom in matter of direct citation St Benedict is most beholden. Of the *Vitae Patrum*, as contained in Rosweyd's great collection, he shows a knowledge of the Lives of Anthony and Pachomius, of Rufinus' translation of the *Historia Monachorum*, and of the collections of 'Apophthegmata' or Words of the Egyptian Fathers: of all these there are clear verbal citations.

Of the earlier monastic rules, he uses with some frequency the translations of those of Pachomius, Basil, Macarius, and certain other Eastern Fathers; and of Western rules he uses those of Caesarius of Arles, and especially that contained in St Augustine's Letter CCXI, later called his Rule: this is definitely cited several times.

When we come to the other category, of general sources, we are brought across a question of much interest, namely, St Benedict's range of reading outside definitely monastic literature, and his measure of education.[1] The only piece of any length derived from a Father is the opening of c. XLIX, which is based on St Leo's sermons for Lent: what is very remarkable is that it is made up of scraps from three different sermons, skilfully fitted together like a mosaic. This implies careful reading and minute knowledge of St Leo's Lenten sermons. Of other Fathers there is one certain and one probable citation from Cyprian; from St Jerome, besides several citations from *Ep.* XXII (which is monastic, describing the manner of life of the Egyptian monks), there are two certain and three or four possible citations from other Epistles; from St Augustine, besides *Ep.* CCXI, already mentioned, there are two certain citations from the sermons, and several probable ones from them and from other works, as *Enarr. in Psalmos*, *de Opere Monachorum*, *de Civitate Dei*. There are also citations from Sulpicius Severus and from one of the Acts of the Martyrs.

It thus appears that St Benedict read and knew some of St Cyprian's treatises (*de Orat. Dom.* and *de Hab. Virg.*); that

[1] There are in my 'Index Scriptorum' a few references to classical authors; they do not, I think, justify the notion that St Benedict had any knowledge of the writers, for some were proverbs and others probably but stock phrases.

he was familiar with St Jerome's letters in general—witness the very unexpected citation from *Ep.* XXXVII, 4;[1] and that he had a general knowledge of St Augustine's sermons and of other of his works. It should be noted that some of the writings in question are not definitely religious in scope, not of the nature of 'spiritual reading'; St Jerome's *Ep.* XXXVII is a discussion of a point of technical scholarship, while his *Ep.* XCVIII, from which is taken the idea of the rungs of Jacob's ladder as the grades of humility, is the translation of one of the Festal Letters of Theophilus against Origenism. This gives evidence of a wider range of reading and a kind of knowledge that our Holy Father has not hitherto been credited with.

## USE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

So far nothing has been said of the Bible as a source of St Benedict's Rule; and yet it was the principal source. His knowledge of Holy Writ was intimate and thorough. My 'Index locorum S. Scripturae' shows that of the Old Testament he most frequently, as might be expected, uses the Psalms and Sapiential Books, but also the Prophets; while of the New Testament nearly all the books are used. The manner in which the texts are utilised argues an intimate familiarity; for it is not usually as set texts, but as reminiscences and allusions that they occur, colouring the thought and language. Let us take a single illustration. The following sentences regulate the appointment of 'deans': 'Eligantur fratres boni testimonii et sanctae conversationis et constituantur decani . . . qui decani tales eligantur in quibus securus abbas partiat onera sua.' St Benedict no doubt got his idea of deans from St Jerome (*Ep.* XXII, 35) and Cassian (*Inst.* IV, 10, etc.), though the word 'decanus' does not occur in either.[2] But it would hardly be anticipated that the above piece is carefully constructed from the passages wherein Moses appointed the 'rulers of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens.'

[1] Hieron. 'cum et Danihel puer senes iudicet:' Benedict, 'quia Samuhel et Danihel pueri presbyteros iudicaverunt' (LXIII, 13).

[2] It is found in Augustine, *de Mor. Eccl.* i, 67.

| REGULA, XXI | DEUT. I, 13, 15 |
| --- | --- |
| Si maior fuerit congregatio eligantur de ipsis fratres boni testimonii et sanctae conversationis, et constituantur decani. | Date ex vobis viros sapientes et gnaros, et quorum *conversatio sit probata.* . . . Tulique de tribubus vestris viros sapientes et nobiles, et *constitui* eos principes, tribunos, et centuriones, et quinquagenarios, ac *decanos.* |
| | EXOD. XVIII, 21, 22 |
| | Provide de omni plebe viros potentes . . . et *constitue* ex eis tribunos, et centuriones, et quinquagenarios, et *decanos.* . . . |
| Qui decani tales eligantur in quibus securus abbas partiat onera sua. | Leviusque sit tibi, *partito in alios onere.* |

The series of coincidences, culminating so strikingly in the final words, seems to make it certain that St Benedict had in mind the passages of Deuteronomy and Exodus; and this, in days when there were no Concordances, is a proof of an extraordinary familiarity with the Bible. The biblical texts just cited are taken from the Vulgate, and the extant Old Latin versions of the verses do not exhibit the resemblances to the Rule. On the other hand, the words of c. II, 28, 'poena sit eis praevalens ipsa mors,' are Old Latin of Is. xxv, 8. I do not think that St Benedict's biblical texts have ever been investigated.

## STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The Rule consists of a Prologue and seventy-three chapters of very unequal length. Dom Edmund Schmidt, to be spoken of in the section on 'Text,' has sought to show that the chapters follow a definite plan, with perfectly articulated logical sequence, so as to form an organic whole from first to last. His demonstration has not met with much acceptance, and for myself I have to say that I consider it in many places far-fetched and forced, and as a whole unconvincing. Still, a certain rough order, or rather grouping, is discernible, which may be set forth thus:

After the Prologue
Chap. I, Definition that the Rule is for cenobites.
II, III, Government of the monastery.
IV-VII, Ascetical principles.
VIII-XX, The canonical Office.
XXI, XXII, Deans and dormitory.
XXIII-XXX, Penitential code.
XXXI-XXXIV, Administration of temporals.
XXXV-LVII, Daily life.
LVIII-LXIII, Recruitment.
LXIV, LXV, Appointment of abbot and provost.
LXVI, LXVII, Enclosure.
LXVIII-LXXII, Community life.
LXXIII, Epilogue.

The question has been raised whether the last seven chapters, LXVII to the end, are not an addition, made by St Benedict himself, to the original Rule. The reason for this surmise is that c. LXVI ends with the injunction: 'We wish this rule to be read frequently to the community, that none of the brothers may excuse himself of his ignorance of it.' It is said that this regulation applies to the entire Rule, and not only to the law of enclosure enunciated in c. LXVI. This point had been noticed by some of the older commentators. It was urged very strongly by Wölfflin in the preface to his edition of the Rule, and it is accepted by Abbot Delatte.[1] I am not satisfied of the truth of this view. The MSS and textual tradition of the Rule afford no support to the theory, there being no trace of any copy ending with c. LXVI.[2] The last seven chapters have not the character of miscellaneous supplements; c. LXVII has a natural connexion with c. LXVI, and the four chapters LXIX to LXXII lay down practical principles to regulate the community life. If the words in question were intended to be the conclusion of the Rule, would not St Benedict after making additions have transferred them to the end? Lastly, a study of St Benedict's language does not

[1] *Commentaire*, Introd. p. iv.

[2] The 'Regula Magistri,' an anonymous rule of the eighth century in ninety-five chapters, based on St Benedict's, ends with the chapter on the Porter, and has been taken by Wölfflin and others as evidence of a copy of the Rule that ended with c. LXV. But c. LXVII can be discerned in cc. XXVIII and LXVI of the 'Regula Magistri.'

confirm the supposition that 'regula' is here to be interpreted of the whole Rule; for in other places he uses the word of a particular prescription, as in c. XLII, 'hanc taciturnitatis regulam,' and elsewhere. I do not think it should cause surprise that St Benedict should give this special emphasis to the law of enclosure, to which he attached unusual importance.

But, after all, the point does not matter greatly, for no one questions that the last seven chapters are St Benedict's own.

## LANGUAGE

St Benedict wrote his Rule in the 'lingua vulgaris' or vernacular Latin spoken in the fifth century, when Latin was beginning to change into the Romance languages. This means that there is in its text a great deal of what, according to the standard of classical latinity, is bad grammar: the accusative and ablative are used quite indifferently after prepositions; there are broken concords in gender and in case, and irregularities in declension and form, and in the use of moods and tenses.[1] This element has been eliminated in the later MSS of the tenth century and in printed editions, the text being conformed to classical usage; but Wölfflin pronounces all these idioms good Low Latin. That St Benedict used the 'lingua vulgaris' is no sign that he did not know Latin; it is quite possible he was able to speak pure Latin with colloquial correctness: but being before all a practical man, he automatically wrote his Rule in the dialect spoken by his monks in daily life. Hallam's strange complaint that the men of those days treated Latin as if it were a living language is curiously perverse, and characteristic of an earlier academic scholarship. Of course they treated Latin as if it were a living language, because it was a living language; fortunately so: for otherwise would the world be without Italian, Spanish, French.

Wölfflin asks whether St Benedict knew Greek. No doubt Greek was still a spoken language in parts of south Italy. But I can detect no evidence that St Benedict knew

[1] See Wölfflin's preface to ed. of *Regula*: also my art. in *Downside Review*, December 1899.

it. I can find no reason for suspecting that he knew St Basil's Rules otherwise than in Rufinus' translation; and the few Greek words he uses are latinised, sometimes out of recognition.

## TEXT

The investigation of the textual history of the Rule was undertaken only in our day. The first to take the matter in hand was that eminent Benedictine scholar, Daniel Haneberg, abbot of St Bonifaz, Munich, and later bishop of Speyer, well known as the first to edit and translate the Arabic 'Canons of Hippolytus.' He collected the readings of a number of MSS of the eleventh century and earlier; but being unable to carry through the work, he handed his materials over to Dom Edmund Schmidt, of Metten in Bavaria, who in 1880 produced the first essay at a critical study of the text.[1] He showed that the earliest MSS before the tenth century fall into two groups or families, representing two clearly defined types of the text. The differences are not, in the majority of cases, great, and seldom affect the substance of the Rule; but they are sufficient to establish a twofold tradition of the text. Schmidt's interpretation of the phenomena was that one of the groups, whereof an Oxford MS, the earliest of all, is protagonist, represents St Benedict's first draft of the Rule, and that the other group represents his final revision.

The late Dr Ludwig Traube of Munich, the scholar who has done the most to elucidate the textual history of the Rule and to fix the lines for its criticism, contested this solution. His tractate on the history of the text[2] is a work of the ripest and most refined scholarship, the product of a probably unrivalled knowledge of the Carolingian epoch. I have treated fully, yet succinctly, of the whole problem in the Prolegomena to my edition of the *Regula*;[3] and those to whom textual criticism is a joy, and others who are interested in knowing the exact text as written by St Benedict, may find there

[1] Prolegomena to his edition of the Rule (see below).

[2] *Textgeschichte der Regula S. Benedicti* (Munich 1898; revised by H. Plenkers 1910).

[3] See also my articles in *Downside Review*, 1899; and *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1902.

what they desire. Here only the briefest statement of the facts can be made.

Traube shows that Schmidt's first group of MSS, represented principally by the Oxford MS, contain a type of text widespread all over western Europe in the seventh and eighth centuries; it was the text universally current in Italy, France, England, and Germany until the ninth century. At the beginning of the ninth century the other text came into vogue, under the influence of the Carolingian revival. Traube shows that it was derived from a codex then at Monte Cassino, believed to be St Benedict's autograph, a transcript whereof was sent to Charles the Great, and became the exemplar of the copies of the Rule propagated in the monasteries of his Empire. One of the copies made from this exemplar still exists, St Gall MS 914, which thus is separated from the Monte Cassino codex by the absence of only a single link. It is evident that if the Monte Cassino codex really was St Benedict's autograph, a point to which we shall refer in a moment, St Gall 914 is an authority for the text of the Rule probably unique in the case of any work of the first six or seven centuries; it may be doubted whether of any other work of such date we possess a copy separated from the original by only one intermediary.

But it will be asked: What of the other type of text which was in almost universal use during the seventh and eighth centuries? Can Schmidt's hypothesis of a first redaction of the Rule be accepted? Traube tests it in more than twenty cases throughout the Rule, and shows, in my judgement successfully, that the readings of Schmidt's first group, as contrasted with those derived from the Monte Cassino codex, have in most cases the characteristics not of primary readings but of secondary; they are attempted corrections, or else mere corruptions, of the Monte Cassino text. It is possible to account for the first group as the contaminated revision of the Monte Cassino text; but not possible to regard the latter as an author's revision of the former. Though I had hesitations at first,[1] when preparing my edition I came to accept fully Traube's demonstration. The phenomenon that a corrupt form of the text should at a very early date have come

[1] See art. in *Downside Review*, December 1899.

into general circulation, the authentic text undergoing an eclipse even of some centuries, will not surprise any who are familiar with the history of the text of the Greek New Testament, where the so-called 'Western Text' supplies an almost exact parallel to what is here postulated in regard to St Benedict's Rule.

And so I accept as an ascertained result that the Monte Cassino codex contained the best text of the Rule that is known to us; but as to whether it really was St Benedict's autograph I have from the first maintained a more sceptical attitude than that of most scholars, Benedictine and other, who have, I believe, all accepted Traube's thesis in support of the claim. The facts may be summarised as follows. At the end of the eighth century the codex was believed at Monte Cassino to be the autograph. It had been presented to the monastery as such by Pope Zachary (*cir.* 750).[1] This is all we *know*. But Traube has reconstructed the previous history of the codex as follows. Paul Warnefrid, describing the destruction of Monte Cassino by the Lombards in 581,[2] says that the monks fled to Rome taking with them, among other things, 'a codex of the Rule which St Benedict had composed.'[3] Traube maintains that this was the autograph, and that it was the codex sent back to Monte Cassino by Zachary. It may be allowed that this theory is possible, and may even have a certain likelihood to recommend it; but I have all along protested that it has not got the certitude accorded to it by the chorus of scholars, and that it can be accepted only as a hypothesis, not as a proved fact. In the first place, however likely it may be that it was St Benedict's autograph that the monks carried to Rome, Paul Warnefrid does not say that it was. 'Codicem sanctae regulae quam praefatus pater composuerat' are his words, and they do not mean or suggest that it was the autograph; for then he should have used 'quem' instead of 'quam,' and some other word, as 'conscripserat,' instead of 'composuerat.' The words mean no

[1] Paul Warnefrid is the authority for this in his *History of the Lombards*, written at Monte Cassino *cir.* 790. His words are: 'Regulam quam beatus pater Benedictus suis sanctis manibus conscripsit' (vi, 40).

[2] Traube adopts Mabillon's date, 581; others, among them Hodgkin, take a later date, 589.

[3] *Op. cit.* iv, 17.

more than 'a copy of St Benedict's Rule,' and they are in marked contrast to those used by Paul when he did mean the autograph (see note 1, p. 172). In the next place, we know that the Monte Cassino monks were established in a monastery by the Lateran basilica in 581 (St Gregory, Dialogues, ii, Pref.); if Monte Cassino had been refounded in 717 from the Lateran community, and if the monks had brought the codex with them, there would indeed be good reason for accepting the belief in its being St. Benedict's autograph as a primitive tradition of Monte Cassino. But neither supposition is true to the facts. In chapter XXI we shall see that an entirely fresh start was made at Monte Cassino in 717. And the codex did not go there until the pontificate of Zachary, 741-752, and then not from the Lateran monastery, but evidently from the papal library. Traube has to suppose that at some time and for some reason unknown the codex had passed from the Lateran monastery to the papal library. This, however, is pure surmise. And so, when we distinguish between surmise and known fact, we see that, strictly speaking, the only reason for accepting the codex as St Benedict's autograph is the belief entertained in the papal library at the middle of the eighth century that it was so.

Though the point is of much interest, it is not of much practical importance; because, autograph or not, the Cassinese codex contained by far the best of all texts known to us; this indeed is the most substantive part of its claim to be the autograph.

In the MSS of the tenth century yet a third type of text is found, the beginnings of which may be traced even in the eighth.[1] It was formed partly by combining readings of the two earlier types, or selecting now one, now another; partly by introducing glosses, not many (see below, p. 176); but principally by the correction of the latinity and the removal of roughnesses and faulty constructions. This text came more and more into vogue in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when it finally supplanted both of the earlier types, and became the only text in current use until the present day. For this reason it may fitly be called the 'textus receptus.'[2]

[1] It was used by Paul Warnefrid in his commentary, *cir.* 775.

[2] It is interesting to observe the perfect parallel existing between the textual history of the *Regula* and that of the *Gregorianum* or Mass Book of Gregory

## EDITIONS

The earliest dated edition of the *Regula* is that published at Venice in 1489; but there were two non-dated editions, at Leipzig and at Paris. Which was the 'editio princeps' seems to be uncertain. A copy of the Paris edition is in the library at Downside; it was printed by Jodocus Badius Ascensius, and though undated, the year MCCCCC is given in a skeleton profession form on fol. xliii verso, so that presumably it was not printed before 1500. It is described in Hain, *2771. From this onwards there have appeared innumerable editions of the Rule. In all editions except the three or four to be mentioned just now, the text is the 'textus receptus,' not even the Maurists having attempted a new edition.

The first essay at a critical edition was that of Dom Edmund Schmidt, already referred to (Ratisbon 1880). Its value lay rather in the Prolegomena, wherein were indicated the lines on which the criticism of the text must proceed, than in the text itself; for the editor hardly even attempted to construct a critical text.

The next critical edition was by Dr Eduard Wölfflin (Leipzig 1895). As a philologist, Wölfflin's interest in the *Regula* lay in its being a Low Latin document, and so he reproduced in text and apparatus all the grammatical eccentricities found in three of the earliest MSS, including among them the Oxford MS, but not St Gall 914. His text is constituted on a method of subjective eclecticism, and is not satisfactory, except for the purpose he had primarily in view.

In 1900 Dom Germain Morin published (Monte Cassino) an exact transcript of the St Gall MS 914, adding the readings of the MSS preserved at Monte Cassino, one of which (175) is of great value, but not attempting to construct a text.

An edition, based on collations of all the principal early MSS and other documents, and fully meeting the exigencies of philological and textual science, has been in preparation for many years by Dr Heribert Plenkers, to appear in the 'Vienna

the Great. In each case a corrupt form was in general use in the seventh and eighth centuries; then Charles the Great obtained authentic copies from Monte Cassino and Rome respectively, and tried to propagate the pure text throughout his Empire; but before long the old corruptions crept back once again into the text and remained undetected and unsuspected until our own day.

Corpus.' Its publication was expected some years ago, and it is to be hoped that it is one of the things only delayed by the War and that it will appear when normal conditions have been restored. Owing to this circumstance, it has come about that the only edition claiming to give a critically reconstructed text is the little 'editio critico-practica' which I produced in 1912 (Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau). The meaning of the title is that my purpose was to produce, not a fully scientific edition responding to the desires of philologists, but one that should be *critical* in the sense that it reproduces accurately the words of St Benedict, as determined by the application of sound critical methods; and *practical* in the sense that it is intended for the everyday use of Benedictine monks, and consequently the most glaring Low Latin irregularities have been toned down.

As it is the only edition of the kind at present in the field, I may be pardoned a few words of further description of it. I should say that Dr. Plenkers generously placed his materials at my disposal.

The Prolegomena, in sixteen pages, discourse in briefest wise of the tradition of the text and the critical method to be followed. It is laid down that the editor's duty is to reproduce the text of the Cassinese 'autograph.' For this ample materials exist; St Gall 914 gives this text very nearly, and there are half a dozen other MSS, Carolingian and Cassinese, that enable us to control it and make the few corrections that are needed. Thus the text may be taken as being that of the 'autograph,' apart from merely grammatical corrections, confined for the most part to cases. There is no full critical apparatus to the MSS used, but in a number of Select Readings special points of interest are illustrated from the MSS, and the divergences from the 'textus receptus' are explained and justified. Under the text are printed the Sources. At the end are four Indexes: of Scripture citations, of writers of the sources, of words, and of things, with a special section of 'Liturgica.' There is besides a 'Medulla doctrinae' or short catechism on the Rule. The volume consists of only 211 pages. For the present I think it may claim to be the only edition that enables the student to work with the Rule for historical or literary purposes. The principal adverse criticisms

passed on it have been made by scholars, Benedictine and other, who would have liked the Low Latin element to have been fully preserved and the edition to have been scientific in the strict sense of the term. This is a criticism of the practical judgement as to what should be aimed at in the edition.

It will be asked, what is the amount of difference between this text and the 'textus receptus'? The differences are very numerous; they are indicated in my edition, and certainly average more than one to a page. But they are for the most part stylistic and do not affect the meaning of the Rule. The following is a list of the principal divergences that have any substance in them:

Prol. 104: *text* 'audivimus habitandi praeceptum: sed si compleamus habitatoris officium! Ergo praeparanda sunt,' etc.; T.R. inserts after 'officium,' 'erimus haeredes regni caelorum. Ergo,' etc. This point I discuss pp. xv and 128. The ending 'sed si compleamus habitatoris officium' has been thought abrupt; but I have since come across an exact parallel in Augustine: 'sonat nescio quid canorum et dulce auribus cordis: sed si non perstrepat mundus' (*Enarr. in Psalm.* xli, § 9).

III, 20: *text* 'proterve aut foris'; T.R. 'proterve intus aut foris.' The text draws a definite distinction between within and without; it means that a monk may never contend with his abbot abroad, but may do so at home, provided it be done respectfully and properly. This gives certainly a better meaning than T.R.

VI, 19: T.R. adds gloss: 'ne plus videatur loqui quam expedit.' The tendency is unduly to stiffen St Benedict's words as to silence.

IX, 1: *text* makes the Night Office begin with 'Domine labia mea aperies,' omitting the 'Deus in adiutorium.' T.R. prefixes 'Deus in adiutorium,' therein assimilating it to the other Hours.

XXVII, 15: *text* 'currere;' T.R. 'curare.' It is the part of the shepherd to 'run' after his sheep (Martène).

XLI, 13: *text* 'absque iusta murmuratione.' T.R. 'absque ulla murmuratione.' According to text, the abbot is so to rule as not to give his monks cause for reasonable murmuring. T.R. tells the abbot he is so to rule that the monks

may never murmur. The former injunction is sound and valuable advice; the latter would be utterly paralysing to all government.

LVIII, 39: 'conversatio morum suorum' (dealt with at length in chapter IX).

LXII, 15: T.R. inserts 'a,' thereby completely changing the meaning of the passage.

In most of these cases the text of the 'autograph' gives a better meaning than the 'textus receptus.' But taking the Rule as a whole, many may be inclined to wonder whether the new edition is an improvement; the critical text contains faulty sentences and obscurities of meaning, where all was plain in the familiar text. It is of the very nature of such a revision as the 'textus receptus' to produce a more polished text and to make plain whatever is ambiguous. But most of us prefer Shakespeare's obscurities and roughnesses to Colley Cibber's clarities; and in the same way we should prefer to wrestle ourselves with the difficulties in the Rule, rather than simply accept the interpretations and glosses of unknown medieval scribes. And surely Benedictines should be glad to have our Holy Father's own very words even when the meaning is not clear.

## COMMENTARIES

This will be the appropriate place to enumerate and briefly appreciate the principal commentaries on the Rule. So far as I know they have not yet been made the object of any systematic study, nor do I pretend to have made any such myself. What follows is a mere sketch, presented in order to arouse interest and perhaps to point out to some young Benedictine worker a field of investigation hitherto unworked, that would yield results of considerable interest for Benedictine history.

The commentaries may be classed as follows: (*a*) early; (*b*) medieval; (*c*) learned, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; (*d*) modern.

(*a*) *Early, of Eighth and Ninth Centuries.*

They are three in number; those of Paul the Deacon, of Smaragdus, and of Hildemar.

(1) Paul the Deacon: *Expositio Pauli diaconi super Regulam*

*S. Benedicti abbatis*, edited at Monte Cassino, under Abbot Tosti's auspices in 1880.[1] This Paul the Deacon is identified with the Paul Warnefrid, called Paul the Deacon, a Lombard and friend not only of the last Lombard kings of Italy but also of Charles the Great, one of the most learned men of his day, who, after the fall of the Lombard kingdom, retired to Monte Cassino, and was a monk there from 780 till his death in 799. During this time he wrote his *History of the Lombards*. It has been assumed that his commentary also was written at Monte Cassino; but Traube, the only scholar who up to the present has made any attempt at a critical investigation of the text, points out what seem to be conclusive indications that it was composed in northern Italy, in the province of Milan.[2] Traube postulates that Paul must have been a monk in some monastery near Milan before going to Monte Cassino; there are, in fact, several years of his life of which no record survives. The commentary must be pronounced to be very good, in fact one of the best; it affords materials for a highly interesting and living picture of the life of the community in which it was written. And it has this unique value, that it is the only picture of the kind coming from the first epoch of Benedictine history, that which preceded the reform associated with the name of Benedict Aniane. Thus it gives us an insight into the earliest phase of Benedictinism, before it was overlaid with ideas and usages of the early Middle Ages, and shows us the working of primitive Benedictinism after it had run its course for two centuries. Its interest would be greatly enhanced could we accept it as a picture of the inner life at Monte Cassino; but Traube's arguments seem to forbid this.[3]

[1] In 'Florilegium' to vol. iv of *Bibliotheca Casinensis;* also as a separate book.

[2] *Textgeschichte*[2], pp. 37-41, 102-7. The most striking of these indications is the list of principal feasts of Saints: Ambrose, Victor, Protasius, Gervasius (c. XIV). This is the Milanese Calendar, not that of Naples or Rome or Monte Cassino itself.

[3] To them I add the following which seem qûite decisive: (1) In c. XXXVI Paul discusses whether only the meat of quadrupeds, or also that of fowls, is forbidden by the Rule, and concludes against fowls being allowed: in this he is at variance with the view held at Monte Cassino at the time, explained in Abbot Theodomar's letter to Charles the Great, written by Paul himself. (2) The commentary gives the triple form of the vow; Theodomar's letter only stability and obedience (see c. IX). (3) In c. XXXIX he explains that one of St Benedict's provisions is according to 'the custom of that land and of the Roman and other provinces,' showing that he wrote elsewhere.

It may be well to state definitely that the text of the Rule standing before each chapter of the commentary is not part of Paul's work; it is found only in the Cassinese copy, and it is textually quite different from the one used in the commentary, which is the 'textus receptus.'

(2) SMARAGDUS: *Expositio Regulae B. Benedicti ab.*, first printed along with Turrecremata's commentary (Cologne 1575: reproduced in Migne, P.L. cii). Smaragdus was abbot of St Mihiel, near Verdun, in the early years of the ninth century, and his commentary was written soon after in 820. It is animated with the spirit of the Carolingian monastic movement, and it was written in the interest of the reform of Benedict of Aniane, of whom Smaragdus was an admirer. Traube says that Smaragdus did not know Paul's commentary, but I am satisfied, from a series of points of contact between them, that he did. It could be shown that Traube's explanation, the employment of common sources, is inadequate, although he kept his own commentary quite original. It is of great value, but it has not got the special interest attaching to Paul's.

(3) HILDEMAR: *Tractatus in Regulam S. Benedicti*, edited at Metten 1880. Hildemar was a Frank who became a monk at Civate, near Milan, about 850. His 'Tractatus' on the Rule were a series of lectures (not published by himself, but taken down by his pupils), wherein he used Paul's commentary as his text, dictating it almost in its entirety, but adding comments and modifying it slightly here and there. These changes give this commentary whatever independent interest it has; but they have not yet been systematically studied.

(*b*) *MEDIEVAL.*

These may be treated more summarily. They tend to be practical and devotional, helps to the personal life of monks. Passing by those of Rupert of Deutz and of St Hildegard, which are hardly commentaries at all, we come to

(4) BERNARD OF MONTE CASSINO: *Expositio in Regulam*, edited at Monte Cassino 1894. Bernard was a Burgundian, who after a distinguished career became abbot of Monte Cassino, 1263-82. He must be reckoned among the great abbots of the later Middle Ages; pious, learned, capable, a man of affairs, but with the religious as well as the temporal welfare of his monastery always at heart. His is a real commentary, and of great value as a picture of life and ideas at Monte Cassino in the thirteenth century, at the heyday of its prosperity and influence. He knew and used extensively the commentaries of Paul and Smaragdus, but his own is a fully original work. He cites Fathers and theologians freely. He wrote also a work entitled *Speculum Monachorum* (Freiburg 1901), a quite good treatise on the obligations of the monastic state.

(5) BOHERIUS: *In Regulam S. Benedicti apparatus*, edited at Subiaco 1908. A French monk, who became bishop of Civita Vecchia in 1364. His main purpose was to illustrate the Rule

from the writings of Cassian, St Jerome, and others. He depends largely on Bernard, but his work is of very inferior value.

(6) TURRECREMATA: *Expositio in Regulam S. P. Benedicti*, printed at Paris 1494, at Venice 1500 (this edition is in the Downside Library), and at Cologne 1575. He was the famous Cardinal Torquemada, the Inquisitor, who died in 1468. He was a Dominican, and one of the most eminent ecclesiastics of the period of the Councils of Constance and Basle, in both of which he took part. He was learned in all the learning of the day, and his commentary is of great excellence. Its interest lies in the fact that it reflects the ideas of the reforming efforts associated with the two Councils aforesaid.

(7) TRITHEMIUS: *Commentarium in S. Benedicti Regulam* (among his works, also separately, 1608). John of Trittenheim, abbot of Spanheim, died 1516; among the most remarkable monks and abbots of the early Renascence, and an earnest reformer of things monastic in the German lands. His commentary extends only to the end of the seventh chapter; it is of abiding value as an exposition of the specifically religious side of the monastic life.

(8) PEREZ: *Commentaria in Regulam S. Patris Benedicti* (Lyons 1624). He was a monk of the Congregation of Valladolid, general of the congregation, and then archbishop of Tarragona, dying in 1637. He represents the learning and the ideas of the immediately post-Tridentine period, and of the phase of Benedictinism presented by the congregations of Italy and Spain.

(9) FR AUGUSTINE BAKER: *Exposition of the Rule*, composed at Cambrai 1632. It has not been printed, but a MS copy is preserved at Downside consisting of some five hundred large quarto pages. He makes considerable use of Turrecremata and Trithemius, also Smaragdus and Perez. His purpose is essentially practical: a simple explanation of the prescriptions of the Rule, suited to the needs of the English Benedictine dames of Cambrai, in regard both to external observance and spiritual instruction.

(*c*) *LEARNED COMMENTARIES OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES.*

So far the commentaries have had a practical purpose, for spiritual edification, being explanations and instructions on what St Benedict said and meant, illustrated often by citations from the Fathers, from canon law, and from the great theologians. But a change now manifests itself, corresponding to the changed spirit that came in with the seventeenth century. The commentaries now assume a markedly historical and archaeological character, the Rule being copiously illustrated by monastic antiquities and traditions.

(10) MÉNARD: *Notae et Observationes* on the 'Concordia Regularum.' St Benedict of Aniane first made a collection of all the rules existing in Latin prior to the ninth century; this was the 'Codex Regularum,' edited by Holsten 1663. He then reorganised the same materials, breaking up the other Rules and throwing their fragments into the shape of a commentary on St Benedict's; this was the 'Concordia Regularum.' Dom Hugues Ménard, one of the earliest of the Maurist scholars, edited it in 1638 (P.L. ciii), adding most excellent notes to all the Rules. Those on St Benedict's Rule must secure for this work a place among the best of the commentaries.

(11) HAEFTEN: *Disquisitionum Monasticarum Libri XII* (Antwerp 1644; a great folio volume of 1400 pages). Haeften was praepositus or prior of Afflighem in the Low Countries. His book is not in the form of a commentary, but the chapters of the Rule are grouped under twelve headings or books, according to subjects. It is a work of great and even extraordinary learning, considering its date, before the Maurists had opened out the sources of information. The great questions concerning the Benedictine Rule and life and even history are treated of with wide knowledge and sound judgement; but the author inclines usually to rigoristic interpretations, therein reflecting the reforming age in which he lived. Prefixed is a commentary on St Gregory's Life of St Benedict. I have found Haeften's, on the whole, the most useful of all the books illustrating the Rule.

(12) MÈGE: *Commentaire sur la Règle de S. Benoist* (Paris 1687). Dom Mège was one of the Maurists, and his commentary brings us into the thick of the controversy between the famous abbot and reformer of la Trappe, de Rancé, and the Black Benedictines. It was in great measure a reply to de Rancé's *Devoirs de la Vie monastique* (1683), wherein had been set forth a view of Benedictine life of extreme rigour, urging the duty of the most literal return to the physical and intellectual conditions of life in St Benedict's own monastery, and even to the ideas of the Fathers of the Egyptian Deserts. Mège combated de Rancé's views on a number of points —on observance of total silence, on studies, on 'fictitious humiliations,' and on the whole tenor of his monastic theory; and gave throughout a milder interpretation of St Benedict's spirit and ideas. If the conception of Benedictine theory that I have consistently maintained in these pages be the true one, then is Mège's commentary sound and good. But it was out of harmony with the tone of the religious world at the time. As is usual in periods of relaxed morality, the good were apt to be 'unco guid,' and took a very strict

view of the religious life. Jansenism and Puritanism were in the air, and de Rancé's sensational conversion had made an immense impression, so that he was the monastic hero of the time, and la Trappe was the fashionable monastery, encircled as it was by the halo of its extraordinary austerities. Thus Mège's commentary fell on an unsympathetic public, and even Court pressure—for strange though it may appear the Court of Louis XIV took a lively interest in these monastic controversies—was brought to bear on the Maurist superiors, who finally had to disavow it and forbid it as lax.

(13) DE RANCÉ: *La Règle de S. B. expliquée selon son véritable esprit* (Paris 1689). This was an answer to Mège. I have not seen it, but a little volume of *Méditations sur la Règle tirées du commentaire de M. de la Trappe* (3rd ed. 1704, in Downside Library) no doubt gives its cream.

(14) MARTÈNE: *Commentarius in Regulam S. P. Benedicti* (Paris 1690). While controverting Mège, it also controverts de Rancé, and so is to some extent a compromise. It became the official commentary of the Maurists and is probably the best known of all, and the most accessible, being reprinted in Migne, P.L. lxvi. Mabillon helped in its composition, supplying a quantity of notes and copies of monastic documents. His name, as well as the author's, guarantees it to be stored with monastic lore, history, archaeology, ritual, etc. It is lengthy; and while recognising its merits I have ever felt it to be overburdened with learning, and have found it lacking in the religious element which one looks for among other things in a commentary.

(15) CALMET: *Commentaire sur la Règle de S. Benoît* (Paris 1732; Latin translation, 1750). Augustine Calmet, abbot of Senones-en-Vosges, was not a Maurist, but a monk of the sister congregation of St Vannes in Lorraine. His commentary is, in my judgement, the best of this group of learned commentaries; it is really learned, but less archaeological than Martène's, and seems to bring out better the spirit and meaning of the Rule. Prefixed is an admirable Preface on the Rule itself and on certain aspects of monastic history and development: this is somewhat enlarged in the Latin edition, which claims to be based on a revision by the author. I have often thought this Preface so good as to merit being printed by itself as an Introduction to the Rule.

(*d*) *MODERN.*

(16) DELATTE: *Commentaire sur la Règle de S. Benoît* (Paris 1913). There is only one modern commentary on the Rule, that of Dom Delatte, abbot of Solesmes, now at Quarr Abbey, Isle of Wight. For an understanding, not only intellectual but spiritual, of the Rule, it is, I think, the best of all. The element of learning, monastic

history and archaeology is there in sufficient proportion, but it does not overload the work; there is also an element of theology in explaining the principles of the Rule. It is highly practical both in details of the life and their application to modern conditions, and also in regard to the spiritual and religious side of the life. It is clear, sane, full (it runs to nearly 600 pages) and satisfying. I do not hesitate to pronounce it, for general purposes of instruction, the best of the commentaries.

In conclusion, if asked for the best commentaries, I should name, from different points of view, these four: those of Paul the Deacon, Haeften, Calmet, Delatte.

# CHAPTER XII

## ST BENEDICT'S ABBOT

WE proceed now to consider in five chapters, XII to XVI, the constitutional aspects of Benedictine Monachism, questions of government, polity, organisation. Many of the matters dealt with in these chapters have been dealt with also in the work of Abbot Raphael Molitor, of St Joseph's in Westphalia, *Religiosi Iuris Capita Selecta* (Ratisbon 1909). The drafts of these chapters had been written six years ago, before I saw Abbot Molitor's book; and therefore it is a satisfaction to find so much of what I had asserted in the light of Benedictine theory and history, here asserted and enforced in the light of canon law.

St Benedict makes the abbot the pivot on which the life of the monastery turns: it is therefore necessary to study with care his idea as to the abbot's person and his office. Having in the preliminary chapter on the various kinds of monks definitely stated that he was going to legislate for cenobites alone—those, that is, who live in a monastery subject to a rule and an abbot—St Benedict devotes the opening chapter of the Rule proper to a description of what the abbot ought to be like. It should be noted that this chapter and the other on the abbot, II and LXIV, are recognised as St Benedict's masterpiece.[1]

(1) The first principle laid down at the outset is that the abbot is Christ's vicegerent in the monastery, that he is believed to hold Christ's place. In c. LXIV the same idea is reiterated: 'The abbot, as he is believed to hold the place of Christ, shall be called dominus and abbot, not of his own assumption, but out of honour and love of Christ: but let him

[1] What follows in this chapter may be found in compact form with full references, in my edition of the *Regula*, 'Medulla Doctrinae,' pp. 160-6, and 'Index Rerum,' pp. 199, 200. Abbot Molitor deals with the laws concerning abbots principally in §§ 152-200, 414-469.

think of this and show himself worthy of such honour.' This principle at once places the life of the monastery on a high level, bringing the motive and sanction of religion into every detail of the daily life, making concrete and practical the idea that in every obedience it is God that is obeyed, as St Benedict insists (see chapter IX).

(2) Also at the outset of the second chapter the next great principle concerning the abbot is laid down, that he is the 'Father,' this being the very meaning of the word abbot. To this aspect of the abbot we shall revert.

(3) The abbot is the 'Shepherd' of God's flock. This idea is enlarged upon in two places (cc. II and XXVII), and lends itself to much appropriate imagery. The dominant idea is to impress on the abbot the care and solicitude he must exercise so as not to lose any one of the sheep entrusted to him. In c. XXVII, 'How the abbot should be solicitous for the excommunicated,' the example of the Good Shepherd is held up to him, 'who left the nine and ninety in the mountains and went to seek the one sheep that had strayed, and had such compassion for its infirmity that He deigned to place it on His sacred shoulders, and so carry it back to the flock.' In like manner the abbot is with all sagacity and industry to bestir himself—'to run'[1]— that he lose not one of the sheep entrusted to him. Similarly in c. II the abbot is warned that the shepherd will be held responsible for whatever defects the Master shall find in His sheep; he is ever to be in fear of the examination the shepherd will have to undergo concerning the sheep committed to his care; and he is exhorted so to treat his monks by adapting himself to them one and all, that 'not merely may he not suffer any loss in the flock placed under his charge, but rather may rejoice in the growth of a good flock.'

(4) The abbot must be the 'wise Physician' who, when any of his monks is labouring under some spiritual disease, must do his utmost to apply the remedy suitable to the case: correction, exhortation, chastisement, teachings of Scripture, public prayer: and if all these remedies fail, then, in the last resort, the 'amputating knife,' 'lest one diseased sheep should infect the whole flock' (c. XXVIII).

[1] 'Currere' is the true reading (XXVII, 15), not 'curare.'

(5) The abbot is the 'Master' (Magister), and in both senses of the word. First he is the master who has to be obeyed (cc. III, V), and who must show to the undisciplined and the negligent, and the unconscionable, and the hard of heart, and the contemners, 'the dread character of the master,' by upbraiding and correcting and chastising them (c. II, 67-80). And secondly, he is the master (c. VI) who has to teach his disciples by word of mouth and still more by example of life (c. II); hence he should be chosen for his wisdom of doctrine, and should be learned in the law of God, that he may be able to bring forth things new and old (c. LXIV).

(6) Finally, the abbot is to be the 'Dispenser' or steward of the house of God (c. LXIV), the administrator who must 'dispose all things prudently and justly' (c. III).

Now that we have seen the aspects under which St Benedict develops his conception of the abbot's office, we must consider his idea of the qualities the abbot should possess. These are enumerated in c. LXIV. The fundamental motive that should weigh in the choice of an abbot is 'merit of life and doctrine of wisdom,' just the same as in the appointment of the deans (c. XXI). Among the special abbatial qualifications the first is that he be 'learned in the divine law'; then he must be chaste, sober, merciful; he must not be turbulent or anxious-minded, not overdoing things or obstinate, not a zealot or unduly suspicious; finally, he is to be prudent and considerate. This may at first sight seem a strange list of qualifications in St Benedict's abbot: the fundamental natural virtues, chastity, sobriety, mercy, are singled out; the remaining provisions are apparently aimed at restraining any tendency to excessive zeal on the part of the abbot, and are a warning to him to be prudent and circumspect in his dealings with his monks. St Benedict seems not so anxious that the abbot should be a disciplinarian, or even a saint, as that he should be endowed with good sense and wise discretion. But this anxiety of St Benedict becomes easily understood when we consider the enormous powers he puts into the abbot's hands, powers practically untrammelled by any legal limitations.

It is not too much to say that the whole life of the community and of the individual monks depends on the abbot's will. St Benedict of course impresses on him that he must

be just and must follow the Rule; but, except in the case of an absolutely vicious abbot (c. LXIV *init.*), there is no final resort, no appeal against the unlimited discretionary power placed by St Benedict in the abbot's hands. It is easy to show this from the Rule. The third chapter provides that the abbot take counsel with the whole community in matters of greater moment, with the seniors in matters of less; but in neither case is it said he should adopt the advice given: rather, he is to 'listen to all, and then consider the matter himself, and do what he judges to be best'; it is to depend on the abbot's decision (arbitrium), and all are to obey him in whatever he may judge to be the more salutary (salubrius); and in c. LXV St Benedict lays down, as the result of his own experience, 'nos vidimus expedire,' that the government of the monastery should depend on the abbot's judgement (arbitrium). In keeping with this, in constant reiteration throughout the Rule, occur the references to the abbot's judgement or command, or permission, or will; in my 'Index Rerum' (*Regula*, p. 199) are collected eighty such passages. They relate to every aspect, every turn of the life, both public and personal. All the officials, deans cellarer praepositus or prior if there be one, are to exercise their functions in entire subordination to the abbot (cc. XXI, XXXI, LXV). The monks are to look to the abbot for everything they need, and are to have nothing except by his permission (cc. XXXIII, LIV, LV); only those whom he designates may intone 'antiphons or psalms at the office (c. XLVII); a priest may say mass only with his leave (c. LX); the punishment of refractory monks is entirely in his hands—it is perhaps in the restitution of the excommunicated or isolated that the purely personal government of the abbot stands out most clearly, his action being at each step reiterated with an insistence that becomes almost comical (c. XLIV). This chapter indeed affords a picture of the abbot's place in every phase of the daily life. It is all summed up in two passages: 'Any one is to be subjected to regular discipline or punishment who shall presume to go out of the enclosure, or go anywhere, or undertake anything, how small soever, without the abbot's order' (c. LXVII); and more generally: 'Everything is to be done by the abbot's will' (c. XLIX).

In view of this enormous unrestricted power, reaching even to the minutest details of the life and work, it is not wonderful that St Benedict was solicitous to impress on his abbot that he must use his great powers wisely and well, and for the purpose for which they were put in his hands, viz. the salvation of the souls of his monks (c. XLI). St Benedict is never tired of impressing this in all sorts of ways upon the abbot: he must know he has not been given a tyranny over the souls of his monks (c. XXVII); he must not, by using his free power, dispose anything unjustly (c. LXIII); he must dispose all things prudently and justly (c. III), and follow the dictates of justice (c. II); he must do everything with the fear of God and with observance of the Rule (c. III); all are to have such help as they may need to carry out their duties without sadness or murmuring (cc. XXXV, LIII). Finally, the abbot must so temper and regulate all things that the brothers may do what they have to do without 'just murmuring' (c. XLI); elsewhere it is abundantly impressed on the monks that, no matter what happens, they must not at any cost murmur (cc. XXXIV, XL); here it is impressed on the abbot that he must not give his monks cause for reasonable murmuring.

St Benedict has a special place in his heart for the delicate, the pusillanimous, the weaklings, and commends them particularly to the abbot's care: all things are to be done in measure for the sake of the pusillanimous (c. XLVIII); such work is to be given to the infirm and delicate that they be not idle, nor yet crushed and discouraged by the weight of the work, and the abbot must have consideration for their weakness (imbecillitas, *ibid.*). He must not allow the strong ones, the disciplinarians, to set the pace in the life of the monastery, but must so temper all things that the strong may have something to desire, and the weak be not driven away (c. LXIV).

It is in the second and sixty-fourth chapters that St Benedict unfolds consecutively his idea of abbatial government. In chapter II he warns the abbot that he has to be the servant of the characters and temperaments of many (multorum servire moribus), and that he must use with one blandishments, with another upbraidings, with another coaxings, and must adapt himself to each one's disposition and intelligence, as he may

see to be most profitable for their progress according to their nature. He enlarges on this point: The obedient and the gentle the abbot is to beseech to advance to perfection, the negligent he is to reprove and upbraid; but as for the unconscionable, the hard, the proud, the disobedient, he is to coerce them with blows and bodily chastisement, without wasting words upon them. The recourse to corporal punishment is enforced also in c. XXVIII and elsewhere. It is a feature of the Rule that is strange in our modern eyes, and seems out of harmony with St Benedict's general instructions to the abbot. But it has to be remembered that a large proportion of his community was composed of uneducated peasants, of emancipated slaves, of half-tamed Goths and other barbarians, who could be effectively dealt with only by these rough and ready methods, common in those days. But certainly the conventional representation of St Benedict in the best period of early Italian art, holding a birch rod, is nought else than a grotesque and unfortunate misconception and travesty of one of the great figures of religious history.

In c. LXIV St Benedict lays before the abbot such maxims as these: He should profit his monks rather than rule over them (prodesse magis quam praesse—St Augustine); when he makes a correction he should do it prudently, and without overdoing it (ne quid nimis), lest in trying to rub off the rust he break the vessel; he must keep an eye on his own weakness, and remember that the bruised reed is not to be broken. This by no means implies that he is to allow vices to grow up; but that he is to cut them off with prudence and charity, as he sees is expedient in each case, and that he should aim at winning love rather than fear (St Augustine). In his commands he must be prudent and considerate, and whether they have to do with the things of God or with the things of the world, he must use discernment and moderation, having in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, who said: 'If I overdrive my flock they will all die in one day.' It is all summed up in the general principle enunciated in connexion with the question of dispensations from the regular fasts, that 'the abbot must temper and regulate everything so that souls may be saved' (c. XLI); the salvation of souls, not the maintenance of regular observance and discipline, is the primary function of his office.

It will readily be conceded that if the abbot takes to heart St Benedict's admonitions and enters into the spirit of his theory of government all will be well in the monastery; but if he does not, what will happen? On what does St Benedict rely to make the abbot, and to keep him, one after his own heart? This perhaps is the most wonderful thing in the Rule: St Benedict relies on religion alone, on the abbot's sense that he will have to render an account to God. It is the first lesson he gives the abbot: 'When one is appointed abbot, let him ever think what a burden he has taken on himself, and to Whom he will have to render an account of his stewardship' (c. LXIV). Also in c. II the idea is insisted on: he must always remember the examination there will be about his government in the dread judgement of God, and must always fear this future examination. It is repeated elsewhere: he must know that without any doubt he will have to render to the most just Judge an account of all his judgements (cc. III, LXV), of all his judgements and doings (c. LXIII); and in all his judgements he must think of God's retribution (c. LV).

Power and responsibility must always be commensurate in a well-balanced scheme of government; and so the abbot's responsibility is as complete as his power. Untrammelled power in the abbot's hands and undivided responsibility on his shoulders, this is St Benedict's idea, and he throws on him the entire responsibility for everything. Thus the abbot will have to render an account to God, not only for his own teaching, but for the obedience of his monks,—if any of them be disobedient or unsatisfactory, the presumption is, for St Benedict, that it is the abbot's fault, and the abbot has to clear himself before God's judgement seat (c. II, 13); whatever is done amiss by his disciples touches him, and he is held responsible (c. XXXVI). Most formidable of all: 'Whatever be the number of brethren under his care, let him know for certain that in the day of judgement he will have to render to the Lord an account of all these souls, without any doubt, as well as of his own soul' (c. II, 109).

This responsibility for his monks' souls means that the abbot has in the fullest sense in their regard the 'care of souls' (cura animarum), and St Benedict employs this technical term in c. XXVII. The abbot is reminded he has taken on himself

that 'difficult and arduous task of ruling souls,' and that he who undertakes to rule souls makes himself liable to render an account; and he is warned, lest making light of the souls entrusted to him he have more care of temporal and worldly concerns, whereas he should rather reflect that he has undertaken to rule souls, of which he will have to give an account (c. II, 88-109).

This function of the abbot, to rule, to direct, his monks' souls, implies that he is their 'Spiritual Father,' and so St Benedict explicitly calls him (pater spiritalis) when enjoining that all the spiritual exercises of the monks—mortifications, austerities, prayers—are to be done with the abbot's counsel and permission, and under his direction (c. XLIX). Among the degrees of humility or self-discipline the fifth is 'that the monk by humble confession conceal not from his abbot the evil thoughts that come into his heart, or the evils that he has done secretly' (c. VII; also among the 'Instruments,' c. IV). There is here no question of sacramental confession; in those days the abbot was not commonly a priest; it is doubtful whether St Benedict was. The object in view was simply self-discipline and guidance. In more recent times such confidences are commonly given to each one's confessor, and it has long been the mind of the Church that a religious superior should in no way be 'ex officio' confessor of his subjects; in the recent Codex of Canon Law the emphasis is strongly put on the opposite idea, that the superior is not the natural or ordinary confessor for his subjects. On the other hand, while religious superiors are strictly forbidden to try in any way to induce their subjects to make to them any manifestation of conscience, or extort from them any forced confidences, subjects are allowed voluntarily to open their mind to their superior, and it is declared 'to be a desirable thing for them to go to their superior with filial confidence, laying open to him, if he be a priest, the doubts and anxieties of their conscience.'[1] It seems to me that, at any rate for the monks, whose superiors always are priests, this provision of the Codex preserves intact St Benedict's idea. For this there is no need

[1] 'Imo expedit ut ipsi (subditi) filiali cum fiducia superiores adeant, eis, si sint sacerdotes, dubia quoque et anxietates suae conscientiae exponentes' (can. 530).

that the abbot should be his monks' confessor; in the passage of the Rule which does suggest sacramental confession, an option is given between the abbot and other spiritual seniors (c. XLVI), and in Paul's commentary (c. LXII) the confessor is mentioned as one distinct from the abbot. But it is needful he should be in a general way their spiritual guide, and in touch with the spiritual life of each one. By this is not meant a fussy, meddlesome direction, so common nowadays, so strongly denounced by St John of the Cross [1] and by Fr Baker, whose teaching, certainly sane and sound for Benedictines, is that once a soul has been properly started and established in a suitable course of spirituality and prayer, the need of direction becomes rare and confined to great occasions. But the younger monks do need teaching and guidance, and it is beyond question that St Benedict looked on the abbot as properly the 'spiritual father' of his monks, the one to whom all, old and young, should have recourse for the instruction and help they need in the spiritual life and the way of prayer. And so he warns the abbot that his primary duty is this ruling of souls.

St Benedict's ideal is that the abbot is the one to whom the monks go naturally, as to a father, for counsel, for encouragement, for consolation in what trouble or difficulties soever may befall them in any sphere of their life. And it is certain the more fully they act in this way, the more simply and thoroughly they are able to give their confidence to their abbot, the better is St Benedict's ideal being realised, and the better will the abbot be able to live up to the arduous rôle imposed on him. It is not in the nature of things that all should be able to give him their confidence equally, and St Benedict provides for strained relations between the abbot and a monk undergoing punishment, telling the abbot to arrange that some wise elderly monk go in, as if secretly, to console the erring brother and bring him to a better mind (c. XXVII). Still, true it is that for any who should habitually hold aloof from the abbot he could be but a religious superior, not St Benedict's abbot; this he can be only for those who surrender themselves whole-heartedly to St Benedict's idea that the abbot as abbot is the spiritual father of his monks.

[1] See the well-known passage, 'Living Flame,' referred to in Appendix, p. 116.

But the abbot is the father in a much broader and more real sense than is suggested by the somewhat technical and professional connotation of the term 'spiritual father.' Fatherhood is the fundamental conception of the very title 'abbot.' St Benedict appeals to St Paul's 'Abba, Father' at the outset of the chapter on the abbot; and he calls him simply 'the father of the monastery' (c. XXXIII). This title 'pater monasterii' is the one habitually used by St Gregory in the life of St Benedict (Dialogues, ii, 3, 4, 7, etc.), and St Gregory is the earliest and purest fount of Benedictine tradition; so that fatherhood is beyond question the primitive and authentic Benedictine idea of the superior. And it is St. Benedict's mind that it be realised and carried out in a very genuine and natural manner. The monks should 'love their abbot with sincere affection' (c. LXXII); the abbot should 'lay himself out to win their love' (studeat amari, c. LXIV); he should 'show the tender aspect of a father' (pium patris ostendat affectum, c. II); and should 'love them' (diligat fratres, c. LXIV) 'with an equal love,' having no favourites (c. II).

From what has been said, it appears that St Benedict's abbot is a father, ruling his monastery and monks with the plenitude of patriarchal authority and power; and without doubt his conception of the abbot's position and office was derived from that of the paterfamilias of the Roman law, still accepted as a recognised social institution.

We have travelled very far from this old Roman idea of the father of the family; and so St Benedict's conception of patriarchal government is quite alien from our modern ideas of limited monarchy, and constitutional government, and popular representation, and elective offices, and boards of directors, and indeed everything democratic, save that the abbot is to be elected by the monks. But if we are inclined to think that so old-world a conception must needs be an anachronism in modern times, we shall do well to reflect that more than one great thinker has held that, in theory, the best kind of government would be the personal rule of a capable, just, and benevolent monarch;[1] and that in so restricted a sphere as a monastery, wherein both ruler and ruled take

[1] A good Platonist tells me this may be said of Plato; and it certainly may of St Thomas (*de Regimine Principum*, lib. i).

religion as the object of their life, this ideal becomes more easily realisable. Moreover, in regard to the things of practical life, working success is the real test of what is good. But history proclaims, emphatically and eloquently, that judged by this test St Benedict has been amply justified in all the ages. Of course not all abbots have lived up to St Benedict's ideal; of course there have been abbots who have used their powers tyrannically, foolishly, selfishly, irreligiously; of course there have been bad abbots, many of them, as there have been bad bishops, and bad popes, and bad kings, and bad presidents of republics, and bad governors of every kind. And of course the unsatisfactory abbots fill an altogether disproportionate place in history, as do unsatisfactory rulers of all sorts. But when we think of the thousands and tens of thousands of Benedictine abbots from St Benedict's day to our own, it becomes clear that the great majority of them must have realised in some adequate measure St Benedict's hopes: because the great sweep of Benedictine history could not by any possibility have been what it has been had the system been vitiated at the core. The abbot is the very heart of St Benedict's institute; and no institution could have thriven and worked and flourished during fourteen centuries and had such a history as the Benedictines have, if all along it was labouring under chronic heart disease.

Thus the mere logic of facts shows that the almost crudely simple form of government adopted by St Benedict, untrammelled authority and undivided responsibility, exercised under the restraining influence of the ever-present sense of religion and the proverbially sobering effect of the mere possession of great power and responsibility, has on the whole worked well; and that St Benedict has been in most cases justified in the assumption with which he opens his chapter on the abbot, that he will be one who is 'worthy to rule over the monastery' (c. II).

The endeavour of this chapter has been to present St Benedict's abbot just as he stood in the holy legislator's mind, the ruler of the community on its definitely religious side, whose primary function is to minister to the religious needs of his monks and promote their spiritual life; and St Benedict's final warning to him at the end of c. II is that he

do not so immerse himself in temporal affairs as to neglect the religious well-being of the souls entrusted to his keeping.

But in course of time the Benedictine abbot underwent great and strange transformations which it will be in place to sketch here. And if in illustration I speak mainly of England, it is because England is most familiar to me; but the developments ran pretty well parallel in all the countries of western Europe.

From the beginning the monasteries tended to acquire property, partly what was bestowed on them by kings and landowners, and partly what they reclaimed by their own work. Thus it came about that the abbots soon found themselves occupying the position of great landlords; it was so at Wearmouth in Northumbria before the end of the seventh century. Then both as landlords, and as being as a rule more highly educated than their lay compeers, they began to take their share in local affairs, to play the part of county magnates, to sit at the shire-mote and on the bench, and take part in the administration of county business, just as other landowners. Then they were in many cases called in by the king to the supreme council of the realm. Naturally and inevitably they were caught up into the feudal system and became feudal lords, exercising the functions, enjoying the privileges, bearing the burdens, sharing the rank of the feudal barons. They had their courts; they attended parliament, and consequently had their London houses; they frequently were engaged on business with or for the king. The popes commissioned them to hear ecclesiastical cases and appeals in England, and the kings employed them on missions to the Holy See and to other sovereigns. At the abbey, too, they had their own quarters separate from the community, and their own establishment; and the income of the monastery was divided in fixed proportions between abbot and community, each having their own obligations towards the upkeep of the house. The abbot was not a 'Lord Abbot' for nothing. This was no courtesy title. The 'Lord Abbot' was not only a lord of parliament, but was as truly a 'lord' of the serfs and vassals, the tenants and retainers throughout his abbey lands, as the baron and earl who were his peers and his next-door neighbours. Jocelin of

Braklond's account of Samson, abbot of St Edmundsbury at the end of the twelfth century, made famous by Carlyle in *Past and Present*, affords a very living picture of the medieval abbot of the best type; a capable masterful man, but a sterling good one, and a good abbot to his community, with their best interests ever at heart.

As it was in England, so was it on the Continent. There the great line of early abbots of Cluny stands out conspicuous. Of them I have written elsewhere: 'The greatness of Cluny is really the greatness of its early abbots. If the short reign of the unworthy Pontius be excepted, Cluny was ruled during a period of 250 years (910-1157) by a succession of seven great abbots, who combined those high qualities of character, ability, and religion that were necessary for so commanding a position. Sprung from noble families of the neighbourhood;[1] educated to the highest level of the culture of those times; endowed with conspicuous ability and prudence in the conduct of affairs; enjoying the consideration and confidence of popes and sovereigns; employed again and again as papal legates and imperial ambassadors; taking part in all great movements of ecclesiastical and secular politics; refusing the first sees in Western Christendom, the cardinalate and the papacy itself: they ever remained true to their state as monks, without loss of piety or religion.'[2]

Another such abbot was that Bernard of Monte Cassino, towards the end of the thirteenth century, whose commentary on the Rule has been spoken of in chapter XI. He was employed by the popes and by Charles of Anjou, king of the Sicilies, on various businesses and embassies, to the imperial court at Constantinople, and to the king of Hungary. He restored Monte Cassino after the dilapidations of war both temporally and spiritually, and is reckoned among the greatest of its abbots.[3] From a somewhat later date may be instanced Philip de Cavarel, abbot of St Vedast, Arras, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the founder of my own monastery of St Gregory, and one of the great abbots of

[1] I remember Mr Edmund Bishop once saying to me that the great abbots who stand out in history were nearly always either of the 'haute noblesse' or the peasantry, and seldom of the professional or lower middle classes.

[2] *Encyc. Brit.* (11th edit.), art. 'Cluny.'

[3] Dom H. Walter's Prolegomena to his *Speculum Monachorum*.

history. He was president of the States of Artois, and as the king of Spain's plenipotentiary concluded the peace with Holland. By his good works, public and private, he won the title 'Father of his country.' He too deserved well of his monastery and monks, being especially zealous in the promotion of sound ecclesiastical studies.[1]

The medieval abbot such as this was really great, and no doubt he worked great good for Church and State alike. But he was not, could not be, St Benedict's abbot. The absences of such an abbot had to be frequent and prolonged; and when at home he lived apart from the monks, hardly sharing in the community life. Thus he was not the personal ruler of the monastery in its daily routine, and the part he played in outside concerns could only be played by sacrificing what St Benedict intended to be the abbot's first duty. And so it came about that the second in command, the prior or provost, became the practical superior of the community in its daily life, and filled the place of St Benedict's abbot.

In most countries the medieval abbot passed away with the Middle Ages, but in the German lands a few abbots continued to be semi-independent territorial lords or princes until the Napoleonic wars. To the medieval abbot succeeded another phase or type of abbot, which may be designated that of the 'grand prélat.' These personages affected much dignity of ceremonial and dress, and in general, as far as was possible, assimilated themselves to the bishops. As has been said, the medieval abbot was really something great; but the seventeenth and eighteenth-century prelatical abbot was not. Only a man with some true greatness in him could be a Samson, or a Bernard of Monte Cassino, or a Philip Cavarel; but any man, how small soever, can play the prelate. The vestiges of this type of abbot have survived into modern times. I have visited a Benedictine abbey where the abbot's quarters were the 'prelatura,' and the abbot himself the 'prelate,' though a quite homely man in manner and life.

In our own day Benedictine abbots, happily, are tending to revert to St Benedict's idea of the abbot. They live the full community life, in most cases undistinguished from their monks by dress, or food, or furniture, or ceremonial; they give

[1] Weldon's eulogium may be read, *Chronological Notes*, p. 174.

themselves up to the personal government of their monasteries and to the care of their monks in all things, spiritual, intellectual, temporal. Democratic government they cannot introduce into their monasteries without breaking away wholly from St Benedict's mind; but all that is best in the spirit of the new age they can assimilate, in simplicity of life, in absence of pomp and ceremonial, in sharing the community work and life, in being among their monks as the true father of the family: in a word, in carrying out in their own persons St Benedict's idea of the abbot.

It will be of interest, in conclusion, to cite Abbot Tosti's epitome of St Benedict's teaching on the abbot, in confirmation of what has been set forth above. This venerable abbot and brilliant historian lived his life at Monte Cassino, and so gives expression to the spirit of that place over which St Benedict's spirit broods as over no other place on earth. 'The abbot is the father of this family. Of what virtues, of how much charity, of how great prudence he ought to be possessed St Benedict explains in his Rule, so that the whole sum of the authority is placed in his hands, and of him will be required the solemn account of the spiritual life and death of his flock. His duties touch individuals and the social structure of his family. If they are diligent, he must be meek and kind; troublesome and rebellious, he must be stern and a prompt inflicter of punishment; but he must behave in such a manner that the name of father shall not be a false title; he must be irreprehensible, so as not to belie his position. He must be a master of deeds, rather than of words; a rigid dispenser of justice, not regarding persons, but merit; having no favourite through mere natural instinct; not giving an unreasonable preference to the noble before the slave, because, whether slaves or free, we are all one in Christ, and all, being under one Lord, bear the same yoke of servitude. The abbot is the centre to which the wills of the monks converge, by the duty of obedience; nevertheless, he is not a lawless autocrat. The fear of the divine Judge, who will require from him an account of the souls of which he is the guardian, but not the master moderates, bends, and adapts his will to the disposition, age and needs of his subjects, so that, by a kind solicitude, he a true father to them' (*San Benedetto*, v; Eng. trans. 114).

Cardinal Gasquet's estimate of St Benedict's abbot is the same: 'The title abbot means father, as expressing the paternal qualities which should characterise his Rule. The monastic system established by St Benedict was based entirely upon the supremacy of the abbot. Though the Rule gives directions as to an abbot's government, and furnishes him with principles on which to act, and binds him to carry out certain prescriptions as to consultation with others in difficult matters, etc., the subject is told to obey without question or hesitation the decision of the superior. Upon this principle of implicit obedience to authority depended the power and success of the monastic system. . . . The position of the abbot among his community may be summed up in the expression made use of by St Benedict. He takes Christ's place. All the exterior respect shown to him presupposes this idea as existing in the mind of the religious. . . . The whole government of every religious house depended upon the abbot. He was the mainspring of the entire machine, and his will in all things was supreme. All the officials, from the prior downward, were appointed by him, and had their authority from him.'[1]

[1] *English Monastic Life*, pp. 42-50.

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE BENEDICTINE FAMILY

THE Congress of Presidents of Black Monk Congregations, held in Rome in 1907, issued the following definition first in the series of Declarations adopted as the result of their deliberations: 'We declare that our order is so constituted that the autonomy of the monastic family in each abbey, according to the Rule, remains intact as the foundation of the order.' Similarly, at the outset they laid down, as the basis of their discussions, that 'the constitution of our order is that each abbey maintains the unity and autonomy of its monastic family.'[1]

Here a great difference appears between Benedictines and other orders. 'The family of St Francis' means the entire body of Franciscans; and so with the other orders that had their origin in the later Middle Ages and in modern times. But the 'Benedictine family' is the community of each particular monastery, so that there are as many Benedictine families as there are fully organised Benedictine monasteries. The idea of the Benedictine community as a family is, so to say, the converse of the idea of the Benedictine abbot as father of his monks, and it is carried out with the like reality and naturalness. It is also the direct consequence of the vow of stability, as follows from the definition of stability given by the Benedictine presidents in 1907: 'By the vow of stability the monk attaches himself to the monastery of his profession, and makes himself a member of the monastic family there existing.' Cardinal Gasquet well depicts this aspect of Benedictine life. The vow of stability, he says, 'is the key to the spirit of monasticism as interpreted in St Benedict's Rule; for by it the monastery is erected into a family to which the monk binds himself for ever; acting only through it, sharing

[1] *Protocollum*, 6, 24. See Abbot Molitor, *Capita Selecta*, §§ 252-64, 324-9.

in all the joys and sorrows of its members, giving and receiving that help, comfort, and strength which come from mutual counsel, and the free intercourse of thoughts and desires, and watched over by a superior who is the father of his family' (*Sketch*, xii). Also: 'The family is the central idea of St Benedict's legislation' (p. xlvi). The same conception of the Benedictine family runs through Abbot Tosti's exposition of the spirit of the Rule.[1] Here we have one of the fundamental differences between the monastic orders (including in this matter the Canons Regular of St Augustine), and the friars and later orders of regular clerks, as the Jesuits, Redemptorists, and other modern orders. In these latter the subject joins the order, or the province, or the congregation; he does not belong to any particular house, but to the body; so that there is no reason, beyond the command of his superiors, why he should be living in one house rather than another. Each community is an accidental aggregation of men; the convent a residence. In the case of monks all this is otherwise: the monk at profession attaches himself to his own monastery by bonds intended to be binding till death; he is incorporated in his own community which has its own corporate existence apart from all other communities of the same institute; the normal, the natural, place for him to be is in his own monastery of profession; if elsewhere, he looks on his own monastery as his 'home,' like the ancestral home of an old family. All this evidently implies a profound, a radical, difference in attitude, in outlook, in spirit, in ideals: it may all be summed up in saying that, while for the friar or regular clerk *detachment* from any particular place is the ideal, in the monk *attachment* to his own one monastery is a virtue. It follows, in the very nature of things, that a Benedictine community is a family in a way that is not possible in the later orders. In them also, of course, there is a sense of family and brotherhood; but the relation is based on principles wholly supernatural, whereas among Benedictines its basis is also natural, flowing from the actual relations on which St Benedict established his institute.

Many of the most marked features of Benedictine life and Benedictine history have their root in this fact that the

[1] *San Benedetto*, v (Eng. trans. p. 114 *seq.*). Also Abbot Guéranger, *Notions sur la Vie monastique*, v; Abbot Wolter, *Elementa*, p. 44.

Benedictine monastery is a family. It is through the family that St Benedict looked to sanctify his monks. The life established by the Rule is nothing else than one that aims at carrying out to the full the Gospel precepts and Gospel counsels by a body of men living together under rule and discipline. These are the common sort of conditions under which men have to live and work out their salvation, as members of societies of various kinds, the family, the parish, the village. St Benedict imposes the same conditions of social life on his monks, and it is his purpose not to aim at sanctifying them as isolated units, but as members of a society knit together by a common life, with common duties, common interests, common property, common meals, common work, common prayer. As Cardinal Gasquet puts it: 'the development of Christian social sanctity is the scope of monasticism' (*Sketch*, xiv). So, too, Abbot Tosti: 'St Benedict wished his disciples to be holy; but to the perfection of the individual he desired to unite the social perfection of the cenobitical family' (*op. cit.* p. 96). Thus, as has already been said (chapter IV), in contrast to the individualism of the older monasticism, St Benedict was a collectivist in the spiritual order; in place of rivalry in ascetical achievement, he established a common mode of life made up of objective duties, and the sanctification of the monk was to be sought by his living the life of the community. Thus the individual is sunk in the community, and it is as a member of his monastic family that the monk stands in relation with both God and man.

Another result of the monastic family is that normally the monk exercises his influence on the outside world, not directly as an individual, but indirectly as a member of the community. This has been brought out by Cardinal Gasquet in a passage that could not be bettered: 'In the monastic order the action of the individual is sunk in that of the corporate body of the community to which he belongs. It is thus not any single man's peculiar gifts or talents, but the united reputation of a body of unknown men which is the power brought by the monastic order to such a work as that of a people's conversion. Not the men who compose the monastic corporation, but the life they live, is the exciting and attractive force. Individual members pass away, but the self-same life goes on, and the

self-same influence continues to manifest itself on those brought within its sphere. . . . One who was not called to the monastic life has said: "It is in the cloister and in the bosom of the sanctuary, where they passed their lives, that the monks have exercised the power of attraction which has drawn to them almost the entire world. The whole Church has, in a manner, established itself upon the monastic order, draws from it its spirit of virtue, and comes to it to renew in men's souls the worship and respect due to God"' (*Sketch*, xvi, xviii).

In various places in the Rule St Benedict lays down the principles that should regulate the daily family life. In c. LXIII a mutual love and respect is enjoined, not only between abbot and monk, but among the monks themselves: 'The juniors are to honour the elders, and the elders to love the juniors' (also in the 'Instruments,' c. IV). Paul Warnefrid's commentary here is striking: 'As a dearly beloved son gives honour to his father, that is, with how great love he gives him honour, with so great love should the junior honour his elder; and with how great affection the father loves his dear son, with so great affection should the elder love his dear junior.'[1] This depicts no Platonic or even merely spiritual affection, but something very real and natural, in the good sense. The chapter goes on to lay down the principles of a simple but exquisite courtesy in the daily family life. No one is to call another by his simple name (puro nomine)—not 'Smith' and 'Brown,' or even 'Benedict' and 'Gregory,'—but the elder is to call the younger 'brother,' and the younger the elder 'reverend father.' And 'whenever the brethren meet one another the younger shall ask the elder for a blessing; and when an elder passes, the junior will rise and offer him a seat, nor will the junior presume to sit alone with him, unless the senior tell him to do so.' Paul is at pains to impress on the senior that, just as the junior is bound to stand up, so is he equally bound to say to him, 'Pray, be seated.'

Four chapters at the end of the Rule regulate further the community life. The 69th forbids one to defend another or take him under his protection, no doubt for the avoidance of cliques; the 70th provides that only those commissioned by the

[1] 'Cum quanta dilectione amoris affectum impendit pater filio suo dilecto, cum tanto amore debet senior dilecto suo iuniori dilectionem impendere.'

abbot, that is the officials, 'may excommunicate or strike any one.' This seems very far from modern conditions; but it serves its purpose at all times; for though it is not likely that any one will strike another physically, it too often happens in community life that one strikes his brother, as St Augustine says, 'with the sword of the tongue.' In most communities there are those, not officials but officious, who think they have a roving mission to set things right, and rebuke their brethren in season and out of season. For peace sake in the community it is essential that corrections be made only by the abbot or the officials commissioned by him. Chapter LXXI prescribes that the brethren are mutually to obey one another, complying with requests or forestalling them, so that 'all the young ones are to obey their elders with all love and solicitude.' In the same chapter St Benedict lays down a practical principle to ensure the smooth working of the family life: when, as is sure to happen in every family, offence is given or taken (perhaps without being given), difficulty in composing the difference is apt to arise in determining who is in the wrong and ought to make the first advance towards reconciliation. St Benedict cuts out this difficulty by defining once for all, as a practical working principle, that the young one is always in the wrong, and must beg pardon of the elder: 'If a brother perceive that the mind of any senior [1] is angered against him or ruffled, even slightly, let him at once, without delay, cast himself on the ground at his feet, and there remain making satisfaction until that disturbance be appeased by a blessing.'

But it is in c. LXXII, 'On the good zeal monks should have,' that St Benedict gives his formal precepts for the community life, which indeed are golden rules for regulating the life of any family, natural no less than monastic: 'Let the monks "in honour prefer one another"; let them most patiently bear with one another's infirmities whether of body or of character; let them vie with one another in obedience; let no one follow what he judges to be useful for himself but rather for another; let them chastely cherish fraternal charity with love; let them fear God; let them love their abbot with sincere and humble

[1] 'Prior' sometimes means, as here, a senior, and sometimes the abbot; but it never has its present meaning of second in command (see Index Verborum to my ed. of *Regula*).

affection; let them place nothing whatever before Christ.' These are, indeed, nothing else than the everlasting principles of the practice of the family virtues and the discipline of family life.

The picture suggested by these passages is one wherein abbot and monks are knit together in the closest bonds of mutual love, respect, forbearance, one and all animated by an unselfish desire to promote the well-being and the interests of the community, rather than his own. The ideal held up is indeed that of a Christian family living and working in concord and mutual affection, under the rule of a father who has no other thought than the good of his family and of each one of its members.

These are ideals: but no one knew better than St Benedict that ideals are not always realised to the full, and certain glimpses we get of his expectations as to the actual working of things throw very welcome side-lights on his conception of the nature of the community life he was forming. For instance, let us turn to c. XXII, 'How monks are to sleep.' Of course, there were no private cells nor any cubicles or partitions till late in the Middle Ages, but the monks slept in one or more common open dormitories. St Benedict says they are to rise 'without delay when the signal is given, and are to hasten each one to be first down for the Opus Dei.' Here, as always, St Benedict holds out the ideal, to get up immediately one is called; but he knew very well that not all would do so, that there would be sleepy-heads and lazy ones who would lie-abed after the call; and so he goes on to say that 'while rising for the Opus Dei they are to encourage each other quietly, because of the excuses of the drowsy' (propter somnolentorum excusationes). This surely suggests a very human picture; those that are up going round as the time for the office draws near, encouraging and coaxing those still lying in bed, telling them how pleasant it will be when they are up, and that they will be late for office, and perhaps annoy Father Abbot. Nor is this all; St Benedict makes definite provision for late comers at the night office, giving them very considerable law, prescribing that they may go to their place without doing penance, provided that they get in before the end of the 94th psalm, said after the third, and to be said very slowly with antiphon

intercalated, so as to prolong it to the utmost, for the express purpose of allowing the laggers to get in (c. XLIII). So is it also at lauds; it is taken for granted they will come dropping in until the end of the 66th psalm, which is to be long drawn out, so that all may be in for the 50th (c. XIII). Similarly at the day hours and at meals a certain law is given before penance need be done for coming late. In this point St Benedict is not good enough for monastic reformers, who are prone to impose a penance on all who come to a conventual act after the knock-up.

Moreover, St Benedict prescribes that those late for office must go into the choir, for otherwise 'there would perchance be such as might settle down to sleep again, or betake themselves to gossiping' (c. XLIII). And during the hours assigned to reading, some seniors are to go round the house, to see that there be 'no slothful (acediosus) brother giving himself up to idleness and gossiping, and so distracting the others' (c. XLVIII). So St Benedict knew quite well, took for granted, and legislated upon the supposition that his monks would not always all get up at the call, nor always all be punctual at the conventual duties; on the contrary, he knew that they would be often late, and that if they got the chance they, or some of them, would go to sleep, or shirk their work or study, or spend their time gossiping together.

This is all, to my mind, very important, and illustrative of the great fundamental conception of Benedictine life treated of in this chapter. For it shows that the kind of discipline St Benedict expected to secure and aimed at securing was not the discipline of a regiment, where everyone has to be punctual to the minute, and is punished if a moment late, and everything has to be precise and 'eyes right,' done to the word of command. His discipline is not military discipline, but the freer discipline of a well-regulated family life. It is not to be expected that any Benedictine abbot should secure a condition of regularity that St Benedict did not secure, and knew he did not secure. If there should be a Benedictine monastery wherein no one ever was late for anything, no one ever broke the rule of silence or the other rules, no one ever gossiped or went to sleep when he ought to be reading or working,—well such a monastery might be, to use Palladius'

favourite word of the Egyptian monks, *θαυμάσιον*, wonderful; but it would not be Benedictine: for such results could be obtained only by methods that St Benedict did not resort to, and the abbot of that monastery had not fully learned St Benedict's lessons. The expression 'well drilled' is sometimes applied to a community as high praise; but a regiment is drilled, a family is not.

Divers practices that have obtained, or obtain, in various Benedictine circles, and that have given rise to controversies among Benedictines, may be rightly judged if brought to the bar of the Benedictine family tradition. For instance, the 'fictitious humiliations,' that were the matter of a lively controversy between de Rancé and Mège. It was the practice at la Trappe, defended by de Rancé in his *Devoirs de la Vie monastique*, for a monk to be publicly accused of something he had not done, just to see how he took it and test his humility. Mège pronounced this an offence against truth; and it is also an offence against the idea of family life. Far more in accord with St Benedict's mind is Fr Baker's dictum, that a superior never should do anything merely to try a subject and test his virtue;[1] this would not apply to novices of whom St Benedict says that the novice-master is to watch them closely and to test whether they be solicitous 'ad opprobria.' Again, 'proclamations' at chapter: that the monks should publicly accuse themselves of their own breaches of rule in externals is according to the Rule (c. XLVI); but that one should be called on to proclaim the faults of another, as was once on a time the vogue, and indeed has usually been a note of reformed observance, has been felt to be a very doubtful and dangerous proceeding, and certainly it is repellent to the idea of family life.[2]

On another offence against family life, wise words of Fr Baker may be cited: 'All secret informings and accusations are most carefully to be avoided, as the ruin of Christian charity in communities. And this concerns superiors as well as others, who ought to be very far from favouring this perniciously officious and uncharitable humour of accusing or

[1] I cannot recover the reference to this; it must be in one of the MS treatises.

[2] So Abbot Wolter, *Elementa*, p. 728.

informing in any of their religious. Much less ought they t esteem that their authority can extend to the prejudice brotherly charity so far as to excuse, or however to oblig any one to be an accuser or informer against his brethren. pretence of doing good to their subjects' souls will be alleg by such superiors as are of a curious inquisitive dispositio and are continually searching into the behaviour of the religious; but little good reformation will ever be wroug by such a humour of jealous curiosity. On the contrary, t effects of it are the breeding of discontents generally in a and the greatest mischief to the souls of private uncharitat informers' (*Sancta Sophia*, p. 232).

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the practi widely prevailed of piercing the doors of the monks' cells wi a tiny window, covered with a slide on the outside, which t abbot alone might open. In the eighteenth century this pra tice entirely dropped out of use; but in the nineteenth it h been reintroduced in certain congregations newly formed. its origin the little window was a survival of the transiti from the open dormitory to private cells, being supposed bring the latter under the early laws as to the dormitory but it has long since ceased to serve any such purpose, and receives a spiritual explanation in Abbot Wolter's *Eleme* (p. 353). It must, however, be pronounced an offence agai family life; for in what home could be found such apertu in the room doors of the sons and daughters of the family?

Again, the reading of letters: the abbot's right to read a letters, in or out, is laid down in the Rule (c. LIV), and sa guarded in all constitutions and declarations. But that letters should habitually and systematically be read is agai family ideas and practice; for no father reads the letters of grown-up sons.

All the practices just animadverted on seem to argu failure on the part of abbots to take to heart St Benedi warning to the abbot that he 'be not too suspicious, or he

[1] I worked out the genesis and history of the 'visitura' in the *Downside view* of 1899, pp. 119-21. The evolution was along the following stages: c dormitory; side partitions between the beds; curtains in front; a latticed in front, making a cubicle; a solid door with a large window; the window g smaller and smaller till it became a peep-hole; the dormitory became a ga of private rooms.

never be at rest' (c. LXIV); they cannot bring themselves to trust, as St Benedict did, to the natural working of the discipline of family life. Such practices came in for the most part in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it has to be observed that the great reforming period of Constance and Basle, and in a less degree the immediately post-Tridentine period, are confessedly not happy periods for old-world Benedictine traditions and notions. As in all periods of violent reaction against widespread abuses, there was then rife, in union with great fervour, a rigoristic spirit, and a spirit of legislating with an eye constantly turned towards the prevention of evil. Such a spirit, it need not be said, is destructive of true family spirit.

There is another offence against family life, very likely to find place in modern monastic life. When a monk is unsatisfactory, or trouble arises between abbot and monk, or between a monk and others of the community, the easiest remedy will often be the monk's removal to another monastery or sphere of action. Yet this is not the proper remedy for such difficulties; it is the negation of the family idea, because the natural place for the cure of unsatisfactoriness is in the bosom of the monastic family. We have only to read cc. II, XXIII, and XXVIII of the Rule to see that St Benedict anticipated there would often be unsatisfactory, and very unsatisfactory, members in the community, and that it is the abbot's duty to deal with such cases personally with a long-suffering discretion; while for the rest of the monks, 'let them bear most patiently with one another's infirmities of character or of body' (c. LXXII). For such cases to be dealt with by removal, except in the last resort, is to take from the community that natural discipline of family life and exercise of family virtue that St Benedict looked to as a principal means for the sanctification of his monks.

Again, parties, cliques, separate interests, 'playing one's own hand,' isolating one's self from the great currents of the life of the community, all these are offences against the family life. It is not possible—it is not so in a family—that every one is equally intimate, equally sympathetic, equally affectionate, with every one else; and some scope may be given to such attractions, as is done in families without marring the

family life. But definite particular friendships must be avoided, or certainly kept in great control, as an offence against the family life.

The conditions of family life impose limits on the number of the community; it must not be such that the monks cannot all know one another, or the abbot cannot know personally all his monks. And it is found in fact that as a rule even the great Black Monk houses had not very large communities—fifty, sixty, seventy; seldom more. There were exceptions; Cluny had three hundred monks in residence, but in other ways also Cluny, as will be seen in a later chapter, sacrificed the family idea.

It follows from the individual autonomous existence of the monastic family of each abbey, that every Benedictine community is a complete independent entity, endowed with the principle of fecundity, and having in itself the power of managing its own affairs.[1] It has its own property belonging to itself, its own finances, perhaps its own group of dependencies. And the management and administration of all this rests with itself. Subject to the ecclesiastical laws in regard to alienations, contracting debts, etc., it has the power of dealing with its property as it thinks best, unhampered by any other monastery. This independent position is preserved intact and confirmed by the new Codex of Canon Law. The name there given to autonomous houses is 'monasteria sui iuris,' and the abbot of such a house ranks among the 'major superiors' (can. 488, § 8), and as such is given a recognised status and extensive rights. I find no definition of 'sui iuris'; presumably it needs none. But everything is referred to the existing rules and constitutions of the institutes concerned. The idea of the monastic family is strengthened by the provision that no one may be translated from one monastery 'sui iuris' to another without permission of the Holy See (can. 632).[2]

From the idea of the family also follows the reason why each Benedictine monastery has its own novitiate.[3] For religious orders not based on the family idea it is likely enough,

[1] Molitor, *op. cit.*, §§ 440-2.

[2] This refers, of course, not to a temporary change of residence, but to full translation, whereby one loses one's rights (as of electing) in the old house and acquires them in the new: 'transferring one's stability' it is sometimes called.

[3] Molitor, *op. cit.*, §§ 330-2.

it is probably true, that it is better to have common novitiate and tirocinium; there are all sorts of reasons, of obvious force, in favour of it. Benedictines need not question them in the case of others; but for themselves the fundamental idea of the monastic family puts them out of court. It is the primary function of the father to propagate the family by the spiritual procreation of the children, and himself to have under his eyes and care the spiritual nurture and growth of his children in the beginnings of their life. It is a contradiction that any one else than the abbot should perform the act of spiritual generation, the clothing and professing of the novices. It is unnatural that the children of the family should in their first years be put out to nurse. It is a mistake, and a loss, that the fervours and sanctities of the novitiate should be associated with any other place than the monk's own home, or with any other superiors than his own abbot and the elders of his own household. All this is no matter of theory, but of fact, and of canon law. For a rescript of the Congregation of Religious, issued in 1908 for the English Benedictines, declares the novitiate in each abbey to be 'according to the nature of the Benedictine family.'[1] And in fact throughout the course of Benedictine history the exceptions are a negligible quantity, so that it is correct to say that the home novitiate has been the perpetual tradition and the universal practice. In other orders the conditions are quite different. The novices are the novices not of any particular house, but of the order or province. The novitiate is passed in a common novitiate house belonging to the province. The novice-master, as well as the superior of the novitiate house, is appointed by chapter or by the higher superiors. He is secured by law a position of independence in face of the superior of the novitiate house in all that concerns the novices, being responsible for them to the superiors of the province, whose subjects they are. The superior of the novitiate house is practically cut off from the novices, except in those things that affect the general discipline of the house. These being the conditions that obtain in most religious orders, the canon law is framed to meet them. But there is a provision for the

[1] 'In singulis abbatiis congregationis Anglicae complete ordinatis tirocinium proprium iuxta indolem familiarum Benedictinarum instituatur.'

case of superiors whose position is different (can. 561), as is that of a Benedictine abbot. In a Benedictine abbey the novices are the children of the house and members of the monastic family—the novitiate may be called the nursery—and the abbot is the father of the novices as truly as of the professed. He appoints the novice-master and entrusts to him the education and formation of the novices, and must leave their training in his hands. But any kind of barriers between abbot and novices, father and children, would be an offence against the idea of the Benedictine family.

The above considerations do not apply in at all the same way to the sending of young professed monks to common houses of studies or to universities. That the young ones should be sent away for a time for purposes of education is not an offence against family life. For many centuries the Holy See has encouraged, and even insisted on, young monks being sent to the universities (as the Bull 'Summi Magistri,' 1336) or to central houses of study. For all that, at the Congress of Presidents in 1907 when a proposal was under consideration that in each congregation one abbey should be made a general house of studies for all, it was declared that 'the most desirable thing is that each abbey should have its own theological school, so that the young monks throughout their course of studies may daily be more and more imbued with the spirit of their own monastic family'; and it is only in face of practical difficulties in securing this ideal that common houses of studies may be desirable.[1]

In this declaration a most true and important principle is enunciated, that each monastic family will have its own spirit, and that the training and education of the young monks ought of set purpose to aim at forming in them the spirit of their own house. Just as every family has its spirit, so will and should each Benedictine monastery have its own spirit distinct in all sorts of ways from that of any other Benedictine monastery; its own tone, its own ideas, its own traditions, its own methods, its own type, its own character. Behind all this, and informing it, is St Benedict's spirit; and colouring it all will be the broad effects of racial and national temperament. But even among the monasteries of one nationality will be

[1] *Protocollum*, p. 17.

found the same kind of differences as exist in families of the same nation. It follows that no close uniformity in the details of life is to be looked for in the houses even of one nation: a general resemblance, yes; but not uniformity.

Just as the family, according to the teaching of Leo XIII, is the unit in civil society, and a nation is made up of distinct families, each an entity, separate and independent, a source of life complete in itself, though not out of relation with other families; so the Benedictine families are the units out of which the Benedictine institute, or 'order,' is made up, and however they may come into relation with other monasteries, they must retain their own separate family life and all that it entails.

And the declaration at the Presidents' Congress lays down that this family spirit is a thing to be cultivated, that the young monks should be so formed as to be imbued with it more and more from day to day.[1] The truth is thus asserted that, for Benedictines, a strong house spirit is a good thing, and any tendency to weaken it and smooth away the distinctive family characteristics of the houses of a congregation, so as to produce a dead level of spirit and observance and daily routine, would be a misconception. The monk should be the child of his own monastery; for him to feel equally at home in whatever monastery he may find himself, would be a sign that he is not possessed of the full family sense that should reign in every Benedictine heart. The ideal frame of mind for the Benedictine is that, while ready to admire other communities and to recognise that in this or that respect they may surpass his own, he should hold and believe, 'intimo cordis affectu,' that on the whole his own community is the best, and his own monastery the most desirable place in the world for him to be in. The relations that unite him to the members of his own community should be different in nature—closer, more intimate, more affectionate—than those he may have with others. All this is but the working expression, the making real, of the fundamental idea that the Benedictine monastery is a family.

Naturally the formation of such a family spirit is a matter of growth and of time; it cannot be made to order; it can

[1] 'In dies propriae familiae monasticae spiritu magis imbuantur.'

hardly be created in a generation. Consequently it is in old-established houses that it is best seen and that it works most effectually. In newly-formed congregations there is the pressing need to found new houses; and while this is being done rapidly, monks have to be sent here and there to work the new foundations. This, at any rate at the outset, is the greater good; but it is purchased at the cost, in great measure, of a weakening of the family sense. Not until monasteries sufficient for the needs of the country have been established, and have had time to form their own permanent communities, can the full richness and beauty of the Benedictine family, as not only a spiritual family but a natural one, develop itself and bring forth its flowers and its fruits.

There is no phenomenon more wonderful than the persistence of the spirit of a community through long ages in spite of what vicissitudes soever, even of changes of locality. In periods of decay and corruption, when all is going wrong, there will always be a succession just enough to hand on intact the sacred flame; and when the period of revival comes, the old fire that has been smouldering on in the heart of every here and there a man, bursts into flame, and reasserts itself with overmastering power, invading the minds of all, until in time the pristine spirit is restored,—the soul of the body corporate, languishing with its sickness, reviving with its recovery waxing strong with its health, dying only with its death This has been the story of the soundest and best Black Monk revivals and reforms. Owing to the fact that each monastery is a family endowed with its natural spirit of life, it has come about that even in times and places of most general depression there has been here or there a house that escaped the prevalent degeneracy: there was no head or heart to disease the whole system. In some of the many centres of life, ideas and desires of better things have begun to pullulate from the fund of natural life inherent in each house, and have grown and taken shape therein by the vitality of the independent family life And then when a house had set itself in order, others would be attracted, and the renewed life would spread spontaneously from house to house, the renewed vigour radiating from many centres, and gradually permeating through ever-widening circles, till it had reached perhaps the hundred or more abbey

of a country. So were formed the great congregations of St Justina in Italy, Bursfeld in Germany, Valladolid in Spain, St Maur in France.

And so the presidents in 1907 were right in putting in the forefront of their deliberations and declarations the idea, the fact, that each Benedictine abbey has its own autonomous monastic family; for that is the ground idea of Benedictine monachism on its social side, and the secret of its history and of the kind of power and influence that the Benedictines have wielded.

# CHAPTER XIV

## BENEDICTINE GOVERNMENT

WE have to study the principles of Benedictine government, both in regard to the single monastery, and in regard to the grouping of monasteries that became the vogue as time went on. The single monastery will be dealt with in this chapter.

We have seen in the chapter on the abbot, that according to St Benedict's idea the ruler of the monastery is the abbot, who rules with the full patriarchal authority of the Roman 'paterfamilias.' But he recognised that if the number of monks grows to any size, the abbot must have helpers in the government of the community; and it was St Benedict's own idea that it would be better to have a number of deans, each in charge of a group of ten to twenty monks, and all on a footing of equality, rather than a single praepositus (or prior) definitely second in command. He discusses the matter in the 65th chapter of the Rule. His reason is that if the authority be distributed among several no one of them will wax proud; he fears that the praepositus may come to think himself 'a second abbot,' and may set himself in opposition to the abbot, breed dissensions, and form a party. Any such rivalry between praepositus and abbot not only is a cause of grave scandal, even unto the endangering of souls, but is utterly subversive of St Benedict's whole plan for the government of the monastery. Consequently although, with much evident misgiving, he allows the abbot to have a praepositus, if he thinks it well to have one; still, he lays down as the absolute condition that the praepositus be chosen and appointed by the abbot himself, after taking counsel with the seniors. And whereas in the case of the other officials he gives an indication of the qualifications they should possess, as that they should be God-fearing, of the praepositus the one qualification insisted on is that he do nothing against the abbot's will or ordinances. Nothing therefore

could be more alien from St Benedict's mind than the idea, sometimes entertained, that the prior is the natural 'leader of the opposition.'

It may be possible that a large amorphous community given up to agriculture could be worked under the abbot by co-ordinate deans. But as soon as such conditions changed and the life of the monastery became in any degree complex, the practical need for a second in command made itself felt, and this became the universal practice so early that I do not know of any record of a Benedictine monastery with St Benedict's deans. The second in command has usually borne the title of claustral prior, or in every-day life simply the prior. In accordance with St Benedict's prescription, he is nominated by the abbot, and removable at his discretion. This applies also to the cellarer and the other officials.

We come now to consider the relation of the officials to the abbot and to the monks. In regard to the first, St Benedict warns them they are in no way to think they are exempted from the abbot's power, and are to do with reverence whatever is ordered them by the abbot (c. LXV); and the cellarer, to whom is entrusted the management of the temporalities, is to do everything according to the abbot's command, and nothing without it (c. XXXI). This position of strict subordination to the abbot is fully maintained in modern declarations, as those of the English Congregation: of the prior it is said he is to have such power of ruling and correcting as the abbot chooses to confer on him (§ 128); and of the cellarer, he is to administer the temporals under the abbot's absolute control, and outside of the ordinary transactions of his office he may not sell, give, hire, lease, lend or borrow without his sanction (§ 35).

While St Benedict shows himself thus jealous of subordinate authority, he intends the principal officials, once appointed, to have in regard to the community a real delegated authority. Thus, concerning the cellarer he says: 'If any one ask him for something unreasonably he is to refuse him reasonably and with humility, so as not to sadden him' (c. XXXI). This shows that the cellarer has a real discretionary power to give or refuse what the monks ask for, and that he can exercise this power himself, without recourse to the abbot on all occasions. Similarly in c. LXXI it is said that the commands of the abbot,

or of the praepositus appointed by him, are to be obeyed first, no private commands given by any one else being allowed to take precedence. This shows that the praepositus has the power of giving orders with real personal authority and that they rank next to those of the abbot.

This, in extension of what has been said in chapter XII on the abbot, seems to cover the whole ground of St Benedict's conception of the government of the monastery. It depends for its practical working on the personality of the abbot. But though, as we have seen, the course of Benedictine history shows that on the whole the abbots must have satisfied in some reasonable measure St Benedict's requirements, still not all Benedictine abbots have risen fully to his conception of the ideal abbot. Consequently, in the course of the ages certain safeguards and safety-valves have been devised to secure the satisfactory working of the system.

Of these the earliest and the chief was Visitation; and the first, and for many centuries the only, visitor was the bishop of the diocese. He was the natural visitor, for the monasteries were local diocesan establishments, each standing by itself, without bond with other monasteries. The root of this institution of episcopal visitation is in the Rule itself. In c. LXIV, in the event of an unworthy or improper abbot being chosen by the monks, St Benedict lays it as a duty on the bishop of the diocese to step in and quash the election, and himself appoint a worthy superior. In the case also of a priest who should prove refractory, the bishop of the diocese is to be asked to intervene (c. LXII). It would be a natural extension of such interventions on the part of the bishop, did it come to be recognised that not only if an unworthy abbot were elected, but also if an abbot should afterwards become unworthy, or if disorders, abuses, scandals, should arise in the monastery, the bishop had the right and duty of intervening to correct and set right what was amiss. This position of the bishop as canonical visitor of the monasteries in his diocese was recognised from a very early date; the Council of Chalcedon had definitely placed the monks under the control of the bishops, and many Councils in the West followed suit. As was natural, difficulties arose on the part both of the monks and the bishops, and St Gregory the Great intervened

on many occasions to regulate the relations between the monasteries and the bishops. Mr Dudden has gone into the point with care, and gives the following summary of St Gregory's settlement of the controversies: 'On the one hand, the bishop was ordered to consecrate new oratories in monasteries, to constitute (ordinare) abbots, to provide for the celebration of masses in the chapel, to visit the monks from time to time, to superintend their life and discipline and punish offenders; on the other hand, he was forbidden to burden the monasteries for his entertainment, to abstract anything from the revenues, properties, or charters, or to make any schedule or disposition thereof. Further, he was forbidden to ordain as abbot a stranger or any person other than him whom the monks themselves elected, or to put a superior over the abbot, or to ordain monks to any ecclesiastical order without the abbot's permission, or to place his chair within the monastery, or to permit public masses to be celebrated there. The bishop, in short, while retaining his spiritual jurisdiction over the monks, with the right of punishing those who failed to live in accordance with their rule, was deprived of all power of interfering in the internal concerns of the monastery, in the disposition of its property, in the election of its officers, and the like. In the management of all such matters the monasteries were left in complete independence.'[1] It seems worth while quoting this piece at length, as these provisions laid down the lines of the common law for many centuries. Still, there was a natural tendency on the part of the monks to secure independence from episcopal control. St Columbanus contested the bishops' rights, and Ven. Bede tells with complacency of a privilege obtained from Pope Agatho by St Benet Biscop for his monastery at Wearmouth, whereby 'it was made safe and free from every kind of external interference (extrinseca irruptio) for ever' (*Hist. Abbatum*). The Cluniacs and Cistercians systematically strove to gain for their monasteries exemption from the jurisdiction of the bishop. The mere Black Monk monasteries did not, as a rule, seek for such exemption. England was not exceptional, and of England right up to the dissolution of the monasteries Cardinal Gasquet writes: 'Although five of the abbeys of

[1] Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, ii, 187, a number of references being given.

England claimed exemption from episcopal jurisdiction, the res of the Benedictine houses in the land, without exception, includ ing some of the greatest and most wealthy monasteries of Chris tendom, were not so exempt, and never thought of trying t withdraw themselves from inclusion in the general law of th Church' (*Sketch*, xliii).[1]

It was a natural development that the bishop's visitatior should not be limited to occasions of crisis in the life of community, such as might call for drastic remedies, as th removal of the abbot, but should take place periodically i order to ensure that things were going well. And when, a will be seen in the next chapter, the fourth Council of Latera 1215, made provision for triennial visitations of Benedictir houses by Benedictine visitors, in the name of the Holy Se it decreed that this was not to be instead of the bishop visitation, but in addition to it, so that the monasteries we subjected to a double system of visitation. And so thin continued in England till the dissolution.[2] On the Contine the congregational system began to come into vogue a centu earlier, and gradually became universal among Benedictine it brought about the general exemption of Benedictine hous and the president of the congregation, or visitors appointed *hoc* by the general chapter, are now the ordinary visitors of t monasteries forming the congregation.

A visitor's duties and powers while the visitation is progress are considerable. He has to form a judgement the state of the monastery in both spirituals and temporals, a for this purpose he must examine into the religious life, o servance, discipline of the community in every aspect; studi administration, finances, accounts, state of the property— have to pass in review. The visitor interviews each mo privately, and all are bound to open their mind to him fu as to anything that calls for correction, reformation, or i provement; his function is to see that the Law of God, t ecclesiastical laws, the Rule and all supplementary regulatic

[1] On exemption and non-exemption see Molitor, *op. cit.* §§ 237-41, 418-431.

[2] Many reports of episcopal visitations of monasteries, Benedictine other, are extant: probably the most easily accessible collection is *Visitation the Diocese of Norwich*, 1492-1532, edited by Dr. Jessop (Camden Society, 18 The account in the Preface of the manner of visitation is instructive.

of constitutions of the congregation or declarations on the Rule, are properly observed, and that the various duties of Benedictine life are faithfully carried out. And he has the power at the end of the visitation of making enactments in order to give effect to the judgements he has formed in its course. As may be imagined, it is no light work to carry out a visitation, and much discretion as well as firmness is necessary to make it fully serve its purpose. It may be said that any sensible abbot will be pleased that his government and administration should be thus periodically overhauled by a wise and responsible outside authority, and that his monks should have an opportunity of making known their complaints, desires, aspirations to a discreet visitor, and so have the chance of a periodical legitimate grumble: for all this, if the visitor be a prudent man, can be nothing else than helpful to the abbot in the government of his community.

Another limitation of the mere discretionary power of the abbot, and safeguard for the maintenance of due observance and discipline, is the imposition of certain general codes of ordinances to be kept by all the monasteries of the country or district, regulating the things not provided for by the Rule, and dispensing from those that have become impracticable or obsolete. The first of such codes of ordinances were the Capitula enacted at the general congress of abbots of the Empire, held at Aachen in 817, under the influence of St Benedict of Aniane; after being accepted by the abbots, they were imposed by the imperial authority on all Benedictine houses of the Empire. A like effort to bring about a uniform level of observance was the 'Regularis Concordia' issued under the influence of St Dunstan a century and a half later, and imposed on the English abbeys by the royal authority. Such codes of enactments grew up elsewhere, many councils, both general and provincial, legislating for the monasteries. A feature of the system of provincial chapters set up by the fourth Lateran Council, 1215, was that the regulations agreed upon by the chapter had to be observed by all the monasteries of the province; in compliance with this legislation a set of English statuta was issued in 1225. Finally, when the congregational system came in, each congregation had a set of constitutions or declarations supplementary to the Rule, which

abbots had to follow in the same sort of manner that S Benedict tells them to follow the Rule itself.

Lastly, the Church by her canon law has imposed definit limits to the abbot's discretionary power in regard to certair things, by enacting that he may not lawfully do them withou the consent of the community. The matters in which th abbot is forbidden to act on his own authority may be said t be those on which the corporate existence of the communit depends, viz. the admission of subjects, the foundation of a new house, and the administration of the monastery property at any rate so far as capital is concerned. Alienation ir its various forms, as mortgaging, comes under quite specia and stringent ecclesiastical laws. But the contracting o debts, the giving of loans, the spending of notable sums o money, building contracts, any serious transaction whereby th finances or property of the monastery is affected, for all thi the abbot must not merely seek the advice, which is all S Benedict says, but must obtain the consent of the council o seniors and of the conventual chapter, composed of the pro fessed choir members of the community. Experience ha shown that the desire to build is a temptation to which Bene dictine abbots, like all superiors, are prone to succumb, anc for the sake of erecting costly buildings the property of a monastery has only too often been greatly encumbered anc its income reduced, so that the community has been im poverished and its very existence jeopardised. In the face o such experiences the ecclesiastical authority has intervened ir the interests of the community, to protect the property from dilapidation by the superior, and laws have been enacted binding on all religious superiors, abbots among the rest. And such interference with the full powers given to his abbo by St Benedict will be applauded as wise and good by every reasonable abbot.

The condition of the healthy working, in Benedictine life of all the aforesaid restrictions is that the abbot's position given him by St Benedict be not interfered with in things that are of its essence. The monastery should be governed in the working of its daily life by the personal rule of the abbot, and not by any code of regulations or by custom. St Benedict expressly gives the abbot the power of modifying the Rule in

regard to food, drink, hours, and such matters, whenever he sees reason for doing so (cc. XXXIX, XL, XLI); he leaves to his judgement such things as clothing, bedding, and all the details of the domestic life (cc. XXII, LV), and he gives him general injunctions to temper and dispose everything as he thinks right. Experience may have shown that it is desirable to set some limitations in these things to the discretionary power of the abbot; but it should always be recognised that such limitations are a departure from St Benedict's mind. It was the fashion in codes of constitutions drawn up in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to regulate minutely and with great precision all such things as quantity and quality of food, horarium, clothes, furniture, etc. But it must be admitted that the more general the nature of such regulations, the more in conformity will they be with St Benedict's mind. And if the abbot, in accordance with the instructions St Benedict gives him, sees fit to mitigate Rule or constitutions in such matters in the case of individuals, or on occasion for the whole community, it would be counter to St Benedict's ideas that monks zealous for observance should come to him, not to remonstrate (which would be quite right), but to quote constitutions and tell him he was going beyond his powers in dispensing them.

Again the abbot's government should be free from interferences out of keeping with St Benedict's mind, either from above or from below. From below: as if the council of seniors were a board of directors, with the abbot as chairman, bound to carry out the decision of the majority; or as if the conventual chapter were a meeting of shareholders passing resolutions. From above: as if there were a superior general to whom the monks looked beyond the abbot as their higher superior, their ultimate and real superior; or a governing body—'a definitory' or chapter—interfering with the administration of the monastery, controlling the abbot in the appointment of his officials, and directing the policy of the house. Particularly, for any one, president or visitor, to come between the abbot and his monks in their personal relations, so as to break the relationship of father and son, would be above all else destructive of St Benedict's idea, and especially in the case of correcting one in fault. The judgement as to the

nature of faults and manner of punishments, and the whol dealing with those in trouble or in fault, is one of the thing most particularly entrusted to the abbot by St Benedic For any one else to intervene between the abbot and the errin monk and to take the case out of the abbot's hands woul be quite counter to St Benedict's mind. And so the Englis declarations enjoin on the visitor that if he find any correctic should be given, he is to see that the abbot gives it. Ther will be more in the next chapter on such interference fro above.

Concerning interference from below, in regard to th obligation imposed on the abbot of obtaining the consent c council or community in certain cases, it has to be noted th the voice of the community is negative, never positive. Th is, it may stop the abbot from doing things he wants to d but it cannot compel him to do things he does not wa to do. Though he is obliged in specified classes of cases obtain the consent of the community before acting, he is nev obliged to carry into execution a measure voted by the cor munity. Thus everything done is the abbot's personal a and the responsibility for it rests on him; he is responsibl too, for things *not* done, unless his action has been blocked l the community when its consent was necessary. Under th system the position of the abbot as designed by St Benedi is kept substantially intact, the various safeguards introduc not changing the nature of the system of government origi ally instituted. St Benedict's idea as to the manner in whi the abbot should admit the community to a voice in the co duct of affairs is expressed in c. III, 'On calling the brethr to council.' The quite general directions there given ha been stiffened into definite legislation in the constitutions a declarations of most of the congregations. Thus, in place the vague directions 'to use the advice of seniors in matte of less moment,' there is now a legally constituted coun consisting of a fixed number of members, usually half a pointed by the abbot and half elected by the monks; a matters are specifically stated for which their consent or a vice has to be obtained. Similarly, the procedure in holdi the conventual chapter of the entire community has be regulated. The first legislation was that of the 'Sum

Magistri' (1336), which made provision for an annual chapter of the community, that the members may work in harmony with the head, and the head may take thought of its members. In the English Congregation there is each year such a solemn meeting, called the annual chapter. Two auditors appointed the previous year, one by the abbot, one by the chapter, present a report on the accounts of the house and its financial state; they have inspected the books and the securities, and should have satisfied themselves that the property of the monastery is not being dilapidated, but is being properly administered: or, if they are not satisfied, they should say so (Decl. 35). All matters of importance, for which the consent of the community is required, or any measures affecting the general good of the monastery, are debated with much freedom. The chapter ordinarily lasts for some six hours, in two or three sessions, but sometimes for a longer time. After twenty years' experience of these open discussions, the unanimous verdict, I believe, is that they are all to the good; certainly they are consonant with English temperament and ways, giving the governed an opportunity of publicly expressing their views and desires, and in a manner that does not really interfere with the position given to the abbot by St Benedict. And very rarely, it may be said never, are St Benedict's prescriptions transgressed as to the manner in which the brethren are to express their views.

The question is sometimes discussed: What is the best form of government in a religious order? Surely an altogether futile discussion! Surely for each religious order its own form of government received from the founder is the best. The founder of a religious order was in every instance a religious genius, who understood clearly the nature of the institute he was founding, and had a true instinct as to the form of government calculated to foster the particular idea and spirit he desired to implant in his creation. The acceptance of the founder's own system of government, as on the whole the best, is part of that faith in their founder and loyalty to him that are natural instincts in his spiritual progeny: a faith and a loyalty that in each of the great orders are amply justified by the career of the institute in history.

Part of St Benedict's system of government is the

'perpetuity' of the abbot's office: once elected, he holds offic for life.[1] Looked at historically this is not open to discussior In St Benedict's day, and for long centuries afterward: nothing else was known in any ecclesiastical offices. It wa with the Carthusians and then with the friars that the syste of electing superiors for short fixed terms of office came i The system was introduced into certain monastic bodies, Celestines and Olivetans, in the thirteenth and fourteent centuries, and early in the fifteenth it appears for the fir time among Black Benedictines proper. This was in t Italian congregation of Justina of Padua, to be spoken of the following chapter, where the whole organisation of th remarkable congregation will be described.[2] From Italy t system of temporal superiors spread to the various Lat nations, to Spain and Portugal, and to France. In Engla up to the dissolution the old system of abbots for life we on; but in the restoration of English Benedictinism at t beginning of the seventeenth century and the formation the present English Congregation, the great majority of t monks having been trained and professed in the monaster of Spain, the constitutions of the Valladolid Congregati were made the basis of those of the renewed English Cc gregation, and among other Spanish features the method electing the superiors for periods of four years was adopt In the German lands, Bavaria, Switzerland, Austria, Benedict's system of abbots for life never was altered; and other lands, France and even Italy, the cradle of the inno tion, the old way was gradually restored; till at the end the nineteenth century the English Congregation stood alc among Black Benedictines in this matter of temporary sup ors. In 1899, however, Leo XIII raised the three princi houses of the congregation, till then only priories, to the t and dignity of abbeys, decreeing that the abbots were to r for life (potestate perpetua).[3]

Thus by the constitutions of all Black Monk congregatio the universal law of Benedictines at the present day is t

[1] Molitor, *op. cit.* §§ 406-13.

[2] The changes in system of government appeared at the time so revolution that a papal Bull was required in 1432 declaring that in spite of appearances congregation of St Justina really was Benedictine.

[3] Bull 'Diu quidem.'

abbots are elected for life. But Leo XIII allowed that the first abbots elected in the English Congregation in 1900 should be elected for a period of eight years; and on each occasion of an election since then a petition has been sent to the Holy See by the community concerned, that the election might again be for a term of years. These petitions have been granted, sometimes for eight years, sometimes for ten, sometimes for twelve. Thus it has come about that notwithstanding the law, the abbots of the English Congregation have not yet been elected for life. In this way I myself was elected abbot of Downside in 1906 for eight years, and re-elected in 1914 for twelve years; so that my term of office will end in 1926. I shall (if I survive) then be close on seventy years of age; and no sane body of electors would think of re-electing a man of seventy to such an office as abbot of a large abbey. Consequently I am able to utter my thoughts on the question of perpetuity with complete aloofness, and to look at it with all the objectivity gained from the experience of my twelve years of rule.

St Benedict's idea of government has been called 'the abbatial system' advisedly, because it is a *system* that hangs together and cannot be touched in one of its constituent elements without disturbing the equilibrium of the whole. Much more is at stake than whether the superior be called abbot or prior, which does not really matter. We have seen that St Benedict gives the abbot practically unlimited discretionary power in all things, and lays on him an equally unlimited and undivided responsibility for everything. His fundamental idea is that the responsibility will be the counterpoise to the power, a sufficient counterpoise to secure a just and proper use of the power. And this purely religious check is the only check St Benedict provides to meet ordinary circumstances; in extraordinary contingencies he looks to the bishop of the diocese to intervene. But unless things go very far astray, in the normal healthy working of the monastery this union of power and responsibility in the abbot is what St Benedict trusted to as the form of government best adapted to produce the results he aimed at in his Rule. This very simple but courageous form of government is St Benedict's system.

But if the abbot's responsibility be removed or materially impaired it is no longer St Benedict's system. And a bird of passage, a superior for three or four or eight years, cannot have the full sense of responsibility according to St Benedict's mind, for the very good reason that he is not, and cannot be, responsible in this way. An abbot who is to hold office till death knows he may rightly and justly, when he stands for judgement, be called upon 'to render an account of the souls of all his monks as well as of his own' (c. II *fin.*); he knows it and feels it, because he recognises that he *is* responsible. But a superior who knows that his tenure of office is only for a short term, and that before his death there will have been a succession of superiors ruling the same community, realises indeed that for particular acts, and in particular cases, he may properly be called to account by God; but knows that it would be an injustice that he should be held individually responsible with the universal responsibility contemplated by St Benedict, because in fact the total responsibility has been divided among several. Accordingly, to put in the abbot's hands St Benedict's powers without St Benedict's responsibility, is not St Benedict's system of government: and it is no system at all.

As a matter of fact, this has been felt; so that when St Benedict's principle of the perpetuity of the abbot's office has been tampered with, some other system of counterpoises and checks has been devised to take the place of the sense of responsibility laid on the abbot by St Benedict, which was broken by the change. The congregation of St Justina of Padua was the first and most thorough-going of these experiments in Benedictine constitution-making, and it was the prototype of all those congregations that abolished perpetuity. As we shall see in the next chapter, all real power was taken from the abbots, who became merely officials to govern the abbeys for four or three years, or even one; and was gathered up in the hands of a small central committee or definitory, which really governed the whole body. This tendency is here seen in its extreme form; but its main features will be recognised by those of us who are old enough to remember the centralised system of government that obtained in the English Congregation before Leo XIII restored the abbatial system.

The sacrifice of perpetuity strikes also a blow at another of St Benedict's most fundamental conceptions, the fatherhood of the abbot, in the Benedictine meaning of the words. It is true that all temporary superiors in all orders and institutes are given the title of 'father'; but this denotes only a spiritual relationship, as a confessor one will never go to again, or as every priest one meets, is called 'father.' It is a spiritual title; and though in the case of a religious superior it connotes an attitude of special obedience and respect and loyalty in his subjects, it has not, and cannot have, that fulness and reality of meaning that it should bear in the case of a Benedictine abbot. It cannot have it, because it is not based on the analogies of nature. The relationship between father and child is by its very essence a lasting one, severed only by death. It is impossible to change one's father every four or eight years. That a family should assemble periodically to receive the resignation of its father and elect a new one for a term of years, is a proceeding compatible with the purely spiritual sense of religious paternity with which we have become familiar; but wholly incompatible with the ideas derived from the analogies of the natural family on which St Benedict based his theory of community life. Benedictines are not concerned to question the wisdom of the new Codex in ordaining that in other orders the local superiors, the priors, guardians, rectors of particular houses, shall hold office for short periods, not exceeding six years; they may readily accept that for others this system is the best. But for themselves, the Benedictine family life and spirit could not grow up and thrive under such conditions. A change of superior commonly involves a change of officials, change in methods of administration, change in domestic atmosphere. All this may make for effectiveness in some ways; but it is, if frequent, death to any true family life. For the formation and maintenance of a family spirit a certain stableness in the community is needed, such as can hardly be unless there be abbacies of some duration. It will not be formed if the community be always in sight of an election. When I was a young man an elder father described the then existing quadriennial system as a year of enthusiasm, a year of disillusionment, a year of work, and a year of looking forward to a change: the first,

second, and last can hardly be avoided; the thing is to increas as much as possible the years of quiet work.

The points that I have tried to bring out are that perpetuit is the safeguard not only of St Benedict's system of goverr ment, but of the two central ideas of the manner of communit life he sought to establish, viz. the fatherhood of the abbo and the family life and spirit of the community.

But while holding firmly to Benedictine principle, on must not be fanatical. It must be recognised that unde temporary superiors, even for short terms of office, very gre results have been achieved among Benedictines: high leve of observance have been secured in the monasteries, and th monks have been most exemplary religious, animated wit St Benedict's spirit in all that concerns prayer and the spiri ual life, and studies have flourished exceedingly. All th has been shown abundantly by history in congregations th have departed widely from all St Benedict's ideas of goverr ment. For all that, if a principal ingredient of St Benedict idea be wanting, the life will not quite be Benedictine life as S Benedict conceived it; there will be something lacking to th full richness that may be hoped for if every element intende by him be preserved. And if the thing sacrificed be som thing so central as the full realisation of the family ideal, tl result cannot but be to impoverish the life in certain aspec and make it fail to be fully what St Benedict intended.

It must be recognised frankly too that perpetuity, like eve form of government, has not only its advantages, but also i disadvantages, which are definite and real. Beautiful ar touching as is Ven. Bede's picture of the death of Abb Benet Biscop of Wearmouth,[1] an old abbot who has becor unable effectively to govern his monastery is not, usuall good for the community. Years of decrepitude and growi failure of powers mean government by officials, which is n a good thing. This difficulty is felt, of course, in the case bishops, parish priests, heads of colleges at Oxford and Ca bridge, and all who hold office for life. In such cases it believed that the advantages of perpetuity outweigh on t whole its disadvantages, and that its disadvantages are less the whole, for the particular institute, than those of the oth

[1] *Historia Abbatum.*

systems. And this is as much as can be claimed for any form of government. It would be expected that, if anywhere, in the United States the attractions of periodical elections of abbots would appeal to men's minds; but I have questioned a number of American Benedictines, abbots and others, and all have assured me that there is no desire among them to tamper with the principle of perpetuity, and that a movement in favour of such action would find small support.

The ideal thing would be if abbots would always recognise when their government had ceased to be for the good of the monastery, and then resign. But old men do not readily believe this. Quite lately two old abbots have given the good example of resigning: but one of them was over eighty. I have sometimes wondered whether a retiring age for abbots could be fixed, sixty-five or seventy, at which they should resign, unless asked by their community to continue in office. This would meet a real difficulty without substantially compromising St Benedict's principles. The objection to the age-limit is that it works too mechanically: one man of seventy may be, as abbot, less aged than another of sixty. And it does not meet the cases in which the causes of failure are due not to age but to incapacity. At whatever age, it should be possible to remove an abbot whose rule, for whatever reasons, is really detrimental to the best interests of the community. 'Salus populi suprema lex.' The good of the community is a good of a higher order than the personal rights of the abbot, or the dignity of the office, or any theories on the abbatial state. And so it would seem that some machinery is needed, not too difficult of application, to bring about the removal of an abbot who has definitely proved a failure and a menace to the well-being of the house. The decree of the Lateran Council cited in the next chapter, in the part providing for monastic visitors of the monasteries, shows that the bishops then had the power of deposing an unsatisfactory abbot by their own authority and without recurrence to Rome, unless indeed by way of an appeal. At the present day if an abbot cannot be persuaded to resign, the only process by which his removal may be brought about is deposition, actual or equivalent, by the Holy See. There seems to be need of some substitute for the power formerly wielded by the bishops.

In the constitutions of the Subiaco Congregation, or Cassinese 'of primitive observance,' it is provided that an abbot may be deposed by the regimen of the congregation for grave faults, or may be absolved from office on account of 'proved ineptitude in governing.' The chapter has to pass the judgement, and then the president and his council carry it out. Some such provision as this could easily be devised which would meet such necessities as they arise.[1]

It is a far sounder method of legislation to provide special means for dealing with emergencies, than to legislate on the basis that emergencies will be the rule. Legislation mainly with an eye on abuses will not be constructive. It shows little confidence in democratic institutions to take for granted that abbots elected by universal suffrage will, usually or often, be failures. To make the exception the basis of legislation and provide for such contingencies by dislocating and breaking St Benedict's central ideas of the government and life of his monasteries, is surely to apply a remedy worse than the disease. It is very possible that some, who recognise that the considerations here put forward are valid as against so short a term of office as four years, may think they are not valid as against a term of eight years. Evidently the longer the term the less urgent they are; but they still are valid. I hope it is not presumption for me, after my experience, to record my definite judgement that periods of eight years are too short for Benedictine life according to St Benedict's mind. If asked what period I think would be compatible with the working of St Benedict's ideal, I would say fifteen years, or certainly nothing less than twelve. But my conviction is that in this matter, as in most others, Benedictines will be well advised if they make an act of faith in St Benedict.

In conclusion, let us see what the new Codex of Canon Law has to say. Its ordinance is that major superiors (among whom are Benedictine abbots) are to be temporary, unless the constitutions ordain otherwise (can. 505). But the constitutions of all Black Monk congregations now ordain that the abbots be for life. The Codex, therefore, so far from discouraging perpetuity among Benedictines, confirms it as the law. This is an instance of the care with which Benedictine

[1] Molitor, *op. cit.* §§ 453-64.

peculiarities have been treated. The laws are made to suit the conditions of the vast majority of religious orders. But in every case, where necessary, there is, as here, a clause safeguarding Benedictine principle and practice. In this way Benedictine tradition is respected not only in the perpetuity of superiors, but in the autonomy of the monastic family, the independence of the congregations, the position of the presidents, the novitiate and houses of studies. So far as I have been able to see, Benedictines have reason to be satisfied with the treatment they receive in the Codex, certainly in the great things.[1]

[1] In illustration of the subject matter of these three chapters, XII, XIII, XIV, Abbot Ford's exposition of the principles of the Benedictine Rule and life, in the article 'Benedict of Nursia' in *Catholic Encyclopedia* (ii, 467), will well repay perusal. 'The religious life as conceived by St Benedict is essentially social.' 'The Rule is entirely occupied with regulating the life of a community of men who live and work and pray and eat together, and this not merely for a course of training, but as a permanent element of life at its best.' 'The superior is the head of a family; all are the permanent members of a household.' 'A Benedictine may be more truly said to enter or join a particular household than to join an order.' In regard to government, St Benedict 'presupposes that the community have bound themselves, by their promise of stability, to spend their lives together under the Rule.' 'The government may be described as a monarchy, with the Rule as its constitution.' 'It is patriarchal or paternal.' 'Within the four corners of the Rule everything is left to the discretion of the abbot, the abuse of whose authority is checked by religion and by open debate with the community.' 'The reality of these checks upon the wilfulness of the ruler can be appreciated only when it is remembered that ruler and community were bound together for life, and that all were inspired by the single purpose of carrying out the conception of life taught in the Gospel.'

A brief account by Abbot Ford of the 'Benedictine Vocation' is reprinted at the end of chapter XVIII.

# CHAPTER XV

## BENEDICTINE POLITY

WE have seen that the presidents of the Black Monk congrega tions in 1907 declared the autonomy of the monastic family i each abbey to be the foundation of the order (above, p. 200 This is in accordance with the Rule, which provides or suggest no kind of bond or relationship between the different abbey in which it is followed. But in course of time monasteries wer formed into groups in various ways; and at the present da all Black Monk monasteries are grouped in congregations, an this is the actual law for Black Benedictines. It will be we worth while to go into this matter with some care, as it affor an opportunity for a study of what may be called 'Benedictir Polity,' a piece of history often misconceived; and it wi enable us to trace the processes whereby the various attemp to bring Benedictine monasteries into relation with one anoth have issued in the system of congregations which is now ur versal. The purpose, therefore, of this chapter is to sketch tl history of these efforts at union, to determine the principl that ought to underlie them, to explain the present congreg tional system, and describe the character and machinery of t existing Black Monk congregations.

The only writer who has treated of this subject, which happily calls 'Monastic Constitutional History,' is Cardir Gasquet, in the Preface which is prefixed to the second editi of the English translation of Montalembert's *Monks of t West* (1895), an illuminating essay, from which what he follows will be in large measure drawn.

The first congregation of Christian monasteries was that St Pachomius,[1] who by the time of his death, *cir.* 350, h established nine or ten monasteries, mostly in southern Egy

[1] See above, chapter II.

They formed an 'order' in the strict sense of the term: 'the abbot of the head-monastery was the superior-general of the whole system; he nominated the superiors of the other houses; he was visitor, and held periodical visitations at all of them; he exercised universal supervision, control, and authority; and every year a general chapter was held at the head-house.'[1] This is a curious anticipation of the centralised forms of government that came into vogue with the orders formed in Europe in the Middle Ages.

St Benedict was familiar with the Latin Life and Rules of Pachomius, and there can be no doubt that at an early date in his career some such idea of an organised body floated before his mind; for when subjects began to flock to him at Subiaco he established twelve monasteries in the neighbourhood, placing twelve monks in each, himself appointing the abbots and exercising a general control over all (Dialogues, ii, 3, 4, 5). But when he went to Monte Cassino we find no trace of any such scheme. Although he seems to anticipate that his Rule would be followed in many monasteries (c. LXXIII) and in different climes (c. LV), it is written just as if it were intended for the one monastery of Monte Cassino alone; nor is there in it any adumbration of any kind of union between the various monasteries in which it might be followed. Of the significance of this change of outlook Cardinal Gasquet well says: 'In these circumstances the very absence of any direction for organisation must be taken as a true and sincere expression of his inmost mind' (*Sketch*, LIV). This should be emphasised as a true historical verdict, in face of tendencies to hold up the Subiaco experiment as indicative of St Benedict's mind, rather than what is found at Monte Cassino and in the Rule. The fact is that the idea of a congregation or order is, like the eremitical life, one of the early ventures on which he definitely turned his back. And so in St Benedict's mind when he wrote the Rule, there was no 'Benedictine polity' whatsoever; each monastery was an entirely independent unit, just as if it were the only monastery in existence. Consequently when the question of union among Benedictine monasteries arises, the Rule has nothing to say, beyond this, that any union must

[1] See my art. 'Monasticism' (*Encyc. Brit.*).

be effected in such a way as not to interfere with St Benedict' fundamental principles.

For two and a half centuries things remained as St Bene dict had left them. During this period the Benedictine Rul was established in the many monasteries founded in the ne countries of north-western Europe converted from heathenis by the Benedictine missionaries, and it gradually supplante all other rules in the old countries already Christian; so tha by the end of the eighth century it had come to be the onl monastic rule in use in western Europe, with the sole e ception of the Celtic lands: so much so that Charles the Gre inquired if there ever had been any other rule. At the b ginning of the ninth century we come across the first mov ment towards a unification of Benedictine monasteries. Th brings us to the subject-matter of Cardinal Gasquet's *Sketc* of which it will be convenient to give an outline here.[1]

Up to the end of the eighth century there had been r attempt to modify or develop the primitive simplicity of S Benedict's conception as to the relation, or rather absence relation, between monasteries in which his Rule was followe 'Each monastic family according to the Rule is a separate un wholly distinct, and with an independent life of its ow (p. xxiii), and up to the year 817 no organic union exist between the monasteries. In 817 Lewis the Pious, under t influence of St Benedict of Aniane, brought together at Aach the abbots of the many monasteries of his vast empire. A ready the first steps had been taken towards the carrying o of Benedict's plans. 'Not far from the imperial palace at A there rose as by enchantment, in the course of a year or tw the monastery which Lewis built for his monk Benedi Here, as example is better than precept, were to be gather the choicest spirits amongst his friends, and its thirty monl with their abbot, were to form the model monastery up which the numerous ancient houses scattered through t broad dominions of the Carolingian empire were to recons tute their lines. Hither might stranger monks come at t bidding of their abbots to inform themselves of the observan

[1] At the time of its appearance I made an analysis of the argument in *Downside Review*, Dec. 1895, the central portion of which is here reproduc The extracts are from the *Sketch*, and the references are to it.

of Inde, and carry them back for adoption in their own houses. Benedict's ideas were perfectly clear and definite. Every monastery and every monk in all his master's realms was to be like to himself and his. He aimed at a cast-iron system of uniformity, and herein lies the essential antagonism of spirit between Benedict of Aniane and the great Benedict' (p. xxv). When the assembly of abbots met in 817, his proposals were brought forward, by which 'there was designed to be uniformity in the quantity of food and drink, uniformity in the time of rising and going to rest, uniformity in their church services and choir ceremonies, uniformity in the length and cut of the habit; in a word, absolute uniformity in everything.' Benedict's scheme was only partially carried through at the meeting, and the means taken to enforce its observance certainly surprise us. 'By the imperial orders inspectors were to be placed in every monastery to see whether what had been ordered was in fact observed, and to train those who were ignorant of the new mode of life.' 'Such were the plans of Benedict, but they passed like a summer's dream. His scheme of a rigid uniformity among the monasteries of the Empire, secured by the appointment of himself as General, aided by an agent or inspector in each house—an idea wholly alien to the most elementary conception of Benedictine life—met with the fate it deserved.' But for all that, good came out of the movement, and 'in these capitula of Aix may be recognised a draft of what are now called constitutions declaratory of the Rule' (pp. xxvi, xxvii).

Somewhat similar in general character and purpose, though very different in conception and spirit, was the 'Regularis Concordia,' brought out by St Dunstan and St Ethelwold, to secure one customary use for all the monasteries of England. And other movements of the same kind and for the same purpose are met with in the tenth century in many parts of Europe. But all the efforts so far mentioned had to do only with the daily inner life of the monasteries; not any of them propounded any scheme of government, or made provision for any centralised organisation or general meetings.

The initiation of such a policy was first made in institutes which, while carefully shaping the inner life and spirit of their monasteries on St Benedict's Rule, formed themselves into

corporations apart from the great body of Benedictine houses, and introduced various systems of organisation to bind themselves more closely together. The great names of Cluny and Citeaux here meet us. Before examining any such systems of organisation, it will be well to lay down some principles by which they should be judged. In the first place it is clear from what has been said that any kind of organisation is a development of St Benedict's idea, and as a matter of fact no such thing was attempted till fully four centuries after his time. Now one of the standards by which true developments are distinguished from corruptions is, as Cardinal Newman so justly lays down, the fidelity with which they preserve the primitive type. That which St Benedict did for the monastic order in the West was to erect the monastery into a family what he does in his Rule is to 'lay down lines for the government of a Christian family desirous of living according to the Gospel counsels' (p. liv). When then there is question of union and organisation among monasteries, the chief point to consider is whether St Benedict's ideal of each monastery being a family is maintained, or whether the natural autonomy and independent life and power of reproduction inherent in a family are unduly encroached upon by any central authority. Judged from this particular standpoint, Cluny, in spite of all its real greatness and its exterior glory, and the fidelity for a considerable time of the inner life of its houses to St Benedict's Rule, is pronounced by Cardinal Gasquet 'a deflection from the mere simplicity of St Benedict's ideas.' And so indeed it evidently was. 'The ideal of Cluny was the existence of one great central monastery with dependencies, even by the hundred spread over many lands, and forming a vast feudal hierarchy. The subordinate monasteries were dependents in the strictest sense. The superior of every house, however great—as, for example, the priory of Lewes—was the nominee of the abbot of Cluny; the profession of every member even in remote England or Spain was made in the name and with the sanction of the abbot of Cluny.' 'It is clear that the Cluny system of dependencies cut at the root of the family life. 'By the very system the priors were but the shadows of the abbot of Cluny, and no house, not even the greatest monastery had any inherent principle of life' (pp. xxxii-xxxv).

The Cistercian system 'preserved the notion of each monastery as a family, endowed with the principle of fecundity'; but it was 'a hierarchical organisation' and 'a highly centralised system,' the life of the whole order being made to turn upon Citeaux and its abbot. The 'Charter of Charity' of the Englishman St Stephen Harding, the real founder of the Cistercians, the document in which the Cistercian system is set forth, lays down that all the monasteries are to maintain an absolute uniformity in all things with Citeaux: 'We will and we order all monks in the confederation to observe the Rule of St Benedict in all things as it is observed at Citeaux.' 'We also will that they abide by the customs and the chant, and have all the books for office and mass, according to the form of the customs and the books of Citeaux.' 'The basis of the Cistercian system lies in the perpetual preeminence of the abbot and house of Citeaux,' and 'the main design of the "Carta caritatis" as a system of government was to safeguard by every possible means the position of Citeaux and its abbot.' This was secured by a yearly chapter of all the abbots held at Citeaux, and a yearly visitation of all the abbeys by the abbot of Citeaux.[1] Lastly, 'with Citeaux the Religious Order in its modern signification appears fully developed,' as 'a corporation excluding all not distinctly on its own lines' (pp. xxxv-xxxviii).

It is evident that by the Cluniac and Cistercian systems everything was made to depend upon the centre, and those spontaneous outbursts of renewed life, which are so remarkable a feature in the history of the mere Benedictines, could hardly have a place. It must be borne in mind, however, that Cluny customs were often adopted in other monasteries, though remaining outside the Cluny organisation, and 'the real and most lasting good effected by Cluny for the monastic order generally was that it undoubtedly sent a current of renewed life through the entire system' (p. xxxviii).

It was not until the beginning of the thirteenth century, some seven hundred years after St Benedict, and at a time when the multitude of great abbeys had already reached their prime, that any attempt on a large scale was made to modify the primeval isolation in which the individual houses of the

[1] The 'Carta Caritatis' is in Migne, P.L. clxvi, 1377.

Black Monks, pure and simple, had hitherto stood and flourished. It was the Fourth Lateran Council, held under Innocent III in 1215, that took the matter in hand, and decreed that in each kingdom or province the Black Monk abbots and conventual priors should every three years meet together in chapter.[1] Four abbots were to be chosen as presidents of the chapter; 'it was, however, expressly provided that none of these presidents should take to himself any authority of a superior.' 'The business of the meeting was to treat of the improvement of regular observance; and whatever was agreed upon, provided it met with the approval of the presidents, was to be observed by all without appeal. Moreover, in each chapter certain prudent and religious men were to be nominated to visit, in the name of the Pope, every Benedictine house of the province, to correct where correction seemed necessary. If in these visitations they should find any abbot worthy of deposition, they were to denounce him to the bishop of the diocese, who was to take the steps necessary for his removal, and if the bishop would not act they were to refer the case to the Holy See.' But the bishops' powers of visiting the monasteries were carefully maintained, so that they were subjected to a twofold visitation. 'The system sketched out in the Council of Lateran satisfied a need long felt as the outcome of practical experience; . . . and whilst preserving to each monastery the ancient Benedictine principle of family autonomy, it was calculated to afford the valuable aids of co-operation and the security of mutual support.' The Bull of Benedict XII, 'Summi Magistri' of 1336, commonly though incorrectly called 'Benedictina,' while introducing fresh legislation in other matters, left the principles of the Lateran Council practically intact as regards government and organisation. The working of this system can be studied in England only, for in spite of efforts here and there, 'no country but England appears to have taken the Council seriously.' The first chapter of the English Black abbots was held in 1218, and chapters

[1] It may be well to explain that 'conventual priors' are the superiors of independent priories or autonomous houses of lower rank than abbeys; they are real superiors with ordinary jurisdiction. 'Claustral priors' are the second in command in abbeys. The 'cathedral priors' in England were the superiors of the monasteries that formed the chapters of nine of the English cathedrals, including Canterbury; they were abbots in all but name.

were held regularly, and the full scheme carried out faithfully until the Dissolution.[1] Although on the Continent the modern system of congregations had begun to come into vogue a century before that date, there never was suggested in England any idea of bringing about a closer union than that of the Lateran and the 'Benedictina'; nor was there any effort to deprive the bishops of the right of visitation. The system, complex as it may appear to the theorist, in practice worked thoroughly well. The English monasteries maintained their prestige, secured in general good discipline, and enjoyed to the end the respect of the Catholic people of England; 'commendam' was unknown; 'and to the last not a single English Benedictine house ever even thought of secularisation.' 'If this be so, it is simply owing to the fact that the monasteries of England frankly accepted, and loyally carried out, the system proposed to them by the Lateran Council—a system wholly consonant with the spirit and tradition of the Benedictine order' (pp. xl-xlv).

It seems that in England, where the scheme was carried out conscientiously and consistently for three centuries, things gradually and naturally worked out into a shape which, although apparently not in those days called a 'congregation' (but a 'province' or 'chapter'), really was such, and a very good type of a congregation on the lines of the Rule and of Benedictine tradition; so that the authors of Reyner's *Apostolatus* are in accord with facts in dating the commencement of the English Congregation from 1215 (or at any rate from 1336, when the two provinces were united into a single national chapter). In other countries the Lateran scheme did not so develop, because it had not a fair chance. But the Council of Constance in the year 1417 compelled the Benedictine abbots of Germany to meet and take measures for the holding of triennial chapters and of visitations, according to the 'Benedictina'; and from that date until the end of the century such chapters were regularly held in the great ecclesiastical province of Mainz, which embraced the greater part of the present German Empire. Contemporaneously with this action of the Council of

[1] In the *Downside Review* of 1886 Edmund Bishop gave, with brief notes, a list of twenty-four chapters held by the English Black Monks between 1218 and 1300.

Constance to enforce in Germany the provincial or national chapters, etc., of the Lateran decrees, another and quite independent movement was initiated in Italy for the renovation of the Benedictine houses. Out of this twofold movement, set on foot when the order was nearly a thousand years old, has gradually grown up the modern congregational system. As Cardinal Gasquet points out, 'these movements took two distinct paths,' and so there have existed two general types of Benedictine congregations. Of the two great types we shall first take that which is met with in the Germanic lands, which arose quite naturally out of the movement set on foot by the Council of Constance, and was but an easy and harmonious development of the Lateran system.

About the year 1420, and as a direct outcome of the chapter held under the influence of the Council of Constance, an observance was introduced in the old abbey of Bursfeld which attracted much attention, and which was gradually embraced by a number of monasteries in different parts of Germany. In the year 1464 these houses determined to form a union among themselves, and at a meeting of the abbots the abbot of Bursfeld was chosen the president of the union. Its constitution was altogether on the lines of the Lateran system, except that the general chapter of the abbots was held annually, and that although there were, as before, four presidents at the chapter, the abbot of Bursfeld was the permanent 'principal president' of the union, the other three being called 'co-presidents,' and of course only annual—a sort of council, no doubt. The abbot of Bursfeld was also the general visitor of the union. Thus his position was somewhat different from that of the contemporary president of the English 'chapter' or congregation, which was the Lateran system pure and simple as it had evolved itself in practice. Moreover, the Bursfeld Union had an elaborate code of laws, such as would now be called constitutions and ceremonial, laying down regulations for elections, chapters, visitations (all based on the 'Benedictina' and the common law), the domestic economy and daily life of the monasteries, the manner of celebrating the church services, and the ceremonies for choir, refectory, etc. And every abbot before taking office was obliged to take a solemn oath to enforce the regulations of this book in his

monastery. Thus the new features presented by the Bursfeld Union are the erection of a permanent centre, and the enforcement, for such as chose to remain in the union, of a uniform set of constitutions and ceremonial, more elaborate than the statutes of the provincial chapters.

For the rest, Cardinal Gasquet thus characterises the Bursfeld Congregation: 'It attempted no novelties, retaining perpetuity of superiors and profession for the monastery. It was a union of independent monasteries joined together for common purposes, and in particular for the maintenance of regular discipline by means of periodical visitations. Whilst preserving to each house the Benedictine principle of autonomy, the Bursfeld Union yet secured for all the help and strength derived from co-operation. It admitted, indeed, in some measure the vicious principle of a "head-monastery" in Bursfeld, but in practice this was neutralised by the singular discretion of the abbots' (pp. li, lii). And Calmet, in the remarkable preface to his commentary on the Rule, written in 1734, pays an eloquent tribute to the excellence of the Bursfeld system both in itself and in its practical workings, as shown forth also in the various congregations that had sprung from it. In our day it is represented, of course with modifications, by what may be called the old German group of congregations, the Swiss and Bavarian and the two American congregations sprung from them; and those quite recently erected out of the old Austrian abbeys are in matters of government and organisation upon the same general lines.

The other phase of the congregational movement began in the abbey of St Justina of Padua, and in the year 1421 this house and three others had agreed upon a scheme of union. The evil of commendatory abbots was at that time widespread in Italy, and the main endeavours of those who were founding the congregation was to devise a system that would render commendatory abbots an impossibility. The means adopted were as follows: general chapter, composed of the superiors and deputies of the communities, met every year, and elected a definitory of eight or nine. This small committee—which Calmet, with some show of probability, as the main founder was a Venetian, says was an imitation of the Council of Ten at Venice—appointed the president, the visitors, the abbot of

each monastery and the officials, prior, cellarer, etc.; all whom, from president and abbots downwards, held office one year only, and were mere deputies of the chapter, which they were bound to render strict account for all th acts. Moreover the monks did not belong by profession any particular house, but to the body of the congregation. is evident that such a system cuts at the root of 'commendan but it also cuts at the root of the traditional Benedictine fam ideal, for 'the monastery, as such, had no independent life existence' (pp. xlvii-xlix).

This congregation of St Justina, coming in a short ti to embrace the hundred and more Benedictine monasteries Italy, was called the Cassinese Congregation; and it 'forn later a model for the monks of France and Spain.' Of many congregations which in the sixteenth and seventee centuries took their inspiration, though often with great m fications, from the Italian Congregation, the most impor were the two illustrious French Congregations of St Var and St Maur; but the Spanish is the most interesting fo in England. For the men who reconstituted the Eng Congregation in the early years of the seventeenth century nearly all been trained in the monasteries of Spain, and sistently followed the lines of the Spanish constitutions. Cardinal Gasquet shows that the Spanish system, though ba on the Italian, adheres much more closely to Benedictine id and traditions. 'The most important difference between congregations of Spain and Italy lay in the fact that Spanish jealously maintained the family system designed St Benedict as far as was possible under a scheme in wh the superiors were not perpetual and were chosen by general chapter. Every monk made his profession for a ho to the family of which he belonged, and every house maintai in all things its own independent life. The abbots, althc only elected for the space of four years, were the real ru of their monasteries, and nominated all their officials' xlix-li).

That which distinguishes the Italian system and its tations is that the *congregation* was the unit of which monasteries composing it formed fractions; and their super elected by the general chapter, were so to speak its deleg

the congregation being ruled by a common superior and a permanent central authority, with executive and administrative powers; whereas under the Lateran system, and in those congregations which grew out of it or did not constitute themselves on the general lines of the Italian system, the individual monastic houses were the units, the congregation being a federation of autonomous houses joined together for common purposes; and the head superior, whatever his title, was not so much the superior as the head of the congregation, his chief functions being to preside at general chapter, visit the monasteries, and perform other offices naturally belonging to a 'primus inter pares.' The characteristic differences of the two systems are expressed by the designations 'congregational' and 'abbatial.'

Such are the main facts of the constitutional history of the Benedictines that emerge from Cardinal Gasquet's pages.[1]

The dividing line between the two types of Benedictine congregation lies in the theory of government. In the one the government is oligarchical, and historically it was devised on the model of the aristocratic oligarchies of the Italian republics at the time when the congregation of St Justina was founded. In the other the government is St Benedict's abbatial system, the monastic family being ruled by the abbot with the position and authority of the Father. It is true to say that the latter form of government is much more patient than the former of the admission of certain popular elements: an aristocratic oligarchy is the very antithesis of democracy.

One who has lived under both systems is able to depict their salient differences. The old constitutions of the English Congregation, drawn up in 1621 and in matters of government in force until 1890, were based on the Spanish modification of the Italian system. All power was vested in the general chapter, held every four years, 'from which, as from its fount, was derived all the jurisdiction of the superiors.' It nominated all superiors,[2] and they all resigned at the following chapter. It was composed of some thirty members, only six being elected by outside votes, and the rest co-opted;

[1] The extract from the *Downside Review* ends here.

[2] Only in the case of a vacancy during the interval between chapters was a prior elected by his community.

so that the chapter renewed itself. The president was distinct from the superiors of the monasteries; he was 'the supreme prelate of the whole congregation and the superior of all the superiors,' and along with the regimen or body of three definitors, who formed a court of appeal, he not only governed the congregation in general but exercised considerable control over the monasteries; and he was the ultimate and real superior of all the monks, the vow of obedience being made to him. In the monasteries there was no conventual chapter but only a council, nominated by the superior on taking office, vacancies being filled up by co-optation. Thus the community at large, though their opinion was sometimes asked, never exercised a vote, direct or indirect, in the concerns of the house. Such a form of government is rightly designated as oligarchical, there being no element of popular representation whatsoever. The abbatial system was introduced by Leo XIII in 1890 and 1899. Under it the abbot is elected by his monks by universal suffrage; half the council is elected by the community; the important affairs of the monastery have to be submitted to conventual chapter, where all have the right to speak and vote; the community elects a delegate to general chapter, which is composed of two representatives of each monastery, the abbot and the elected delegate, and only four co-opted members. The president is not 'superior of superiors,' but merely president, and the monks are entirely the subjects of their own abbots. This system not only puts the abbots in their rightful place, but also introduces a polity which bears the impress of our modern days, and strikes the note of constitutionalism and of the representation of the governed, which is of the very life of our English institutions all the world over. It is more Benedictine than its predecessor, and also more democratic.

It is important to observe that the only general legislation of the Church concerning the formation and organisation of congregations of Black Monk monasteries is that contained in the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, 'In singulis' (cited above, p. 240). The Bull 'Summi Magistri' of Benedict XII, commonly called 'Benedictina,' 1336, supplements it, indeed, in regard to working details, but leaves its principles untouched. From the time that congregations in

the modern sense began to be formed at the beginning of the fifteenth century and onwards until the present day, a great number of codes of constitutions have been sanctioned by the Holy See, containing congregational systems in great variety, —such variety, that it is impossible to deduce from them any general idea whatsoever as to the mind of the Church in regard to Benedictine polity. Many of the systems which were thus approved, and which had a great vogue, were at variance with the fundamental ideas of St Benedict's Rule as to the government of monasteries, and even as to their very nature. However, it may be said on the whole that in England up to the Dissolution, and in the German-speaking lands, the congregational systems introduced were in conformity with the spirit of the Lateran decree, and with the spirit of St Benedict's Rule. The root idea of the Lateran decree was the grouping of the monasteries in federations according to nations, or to ecclesiastical provinces where these were large: but the principle of grouping was strictly local and national. The abbots and conventual priors were to assemble in chapter every three years to deliberate on matters of common interest, especially the promotion of regular observance, and to make laws in furtherance of these objects, which should be binding on all; they were also to provide for a system of visitations of all the monasteries in the name of the Holy See. There was no idea of enforcing any minute conformity in observance and life, and the presidents of the chapter were not superiors, and appear to have had no authority when the chapter was over. Thus the full natural autonomy of the individual monasteries was kept intact, and St Benedict's Rule and ideas remained in full force.

In this matter of bringing the monasteries into relation with one another, the Bull 'Benedictina' (1336) only carried a step further the Lateran legislation, which had established a chapter or embryonic congregation in each ecclesiastical province. The 'Benedictina' amalgamated for this purpose contiguous provinces, and so tended to make the congregations fully national: thus in England, instead of the two chapters of Canterbury and York, a single chapter of the whole land was formed. The system thus set up by the Lateran decree, as supplemented by the 'Benedictina,' is still to this day the only

one that can claim to be the common law for Benedictines i the matter of federation, all later constitutions being by the very nature particular legislation. But all such constitution until our own time were based on the territorial and nationa principle of the Lateran decree and the 'Benedictina.' Some times there was more than one congregation in a country; bu never, it may be said, did a mere Black Monk congregatio overflow the limits of its country of origin.[1] The outstand ing exceptions were Cluny and Citeaux, both international o principle. Citeaux, of course, is not Black Monk, and ha ideas and traditions of its own; and Cluny, though Black, wa not a Benedictine congregation, but a fully organised orde living according to St Benedict's Rule, like the Olivetan Vallombrosians, and other Benedictine offshoots. In spite o the glories of the first two and a half centuries, the decline o Cluny from the middle of the twelfth century is one of th saddest pages in monastic history,[2] and the dependencies i foreign lands were a chief contributing source of the decay The Cluniac 'alien priories' were the weak spot in Englis monasticism during the later Middle Ages, never entering int the healthy life of the country.[3] And the volume of visitatior of the Cluniac dependencies in the province of German (including Switzerland, Alsace, Lorraine) during the thirteentl fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, reveals a state of thing that must be pronounced in a high degree unsatisfactory.[4]

After this disquisition on the history, theory, and law o Benedictine congregations, it will be of interest to pass briefl in review the actual Black Monk congregations now existin —fourteen in number. In this sketch things are represente as they were in 1914, before the War. The congregations ar as follows, according to date of formation:

[1] The case of the English Congregation in the seventeenth and eighteen centuries is no real exception. It being impossible under the penal laws for i monasteries to be in England, they were scattered in Flanders, France, Lorrain Hanover. But they remained thoroughly English, and did not attempt to recru in any measure from the countries where they enjoyed hospitality. The mona teries are now all in England.

[2] See my art. 'Cluny' in *Encyc. Brit.*

[3] See Card. Gasquet's *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, c. ii (tl unabridged ed.).

[4] Sir G. Duckett, *Visitations and Chapters-General of the Order of Clun* 1893.

1. Cassinese, or old Italian, 1421.
2. English (1215; 1336), 1619.
3. Swiss, 1602.
4. Bavarian, 1684.
5. Hungarian (1500), 1802.
6. Brazilian, 1828.
7. French, 1837.
8. American-Cassinese (from Bavaria), 1855.[1]
9. Beuron (Prussian dominions), 1868.
10. Subiaco or Cassinese of 'primitive observance,' 1872.
11. American-Swiss, 1881.
12. Austrian, of the Immaculate Conception, 1889.
13. Austrian, of St Joseph, 1889.
14. St Ottilien (Foreign Missions), 1904.[2]

Of these fourteen congregations, eight (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13) in their general features present a fairly close resemblance. They may be said to be organised on the Lateran system as summarised above (p. 247); for the Cassinese, like the English, has in our own day shed the abnormalities of the system of St Justina. They are loose federations, on a national basis, of autonomous equal monasteries, which (except in the two American congregations, 8 and 11) had an independent existence prior to the congregation. The president is one of the abbots, elected by general chapter for periods of various length;[3] he is merely 'primus inter pares.' Each monastery retains its own jurisdiction and administration intact,[4] and its own full family life, there being no attempt to enforce rigid conformity in the details of the observance and daily life. In general, too, the manner of life, the spirit and the work of these eight congregations are of much the same character, with the differences naturally arising from differences in the conditions and necessities of the countries in which they are.

[1] This congregation had no connection with the Cassinese; the name is merely titular, a sign of respect for Monte Cassino. The congregation is of Bavarian origin.

[2] There is also the Armenian Mechitarist Congregation with its houses at San Lazaro, Venice, and at Vienna, which follows the Benedictine Rule.

[3] In the Swiss Congregation it has become the custom for the abbot of Einsiedeln to be the president.

[4] E.g.: 'sua cuique monasterio iurisdictione atque administratione manentibus' (Const. Congr. Angl. § 137; adopted in the Austrian constitutions).

To them may be added the Hungarian Congregation devoted to the same kinds of work, though its polity and constitutions are quite peculiar to itself, being adapted to its own special conditions. All the monks are professed for the great abbey of St Martin, Pannonhalma, which is the only monastery in the full sense.

These nine may be called the older congregations, because the two American congregations have inherited the ideas o the Bavarian and the Swiss, from which they went forth, and the two Austrian congregations, though the youngest in date of erection, were formed out of monasteries that had existed for several centuries.

Passing by the Brazilian Congregation, in process of re construction, and the newly created Ottilian Congregation fo Foreign Missions (head house, St Ottilien, in Bavaria, to b spoken of in chapter XIX), we meet three congregation organised on different lines, and embodying other conception of Benedictine polity.

Two of these are nearly allied; the French Congregatio of Solesmes, founded by Abbot Guéranger in 1837, and th German Congregation of Beuron, near Sigmaringen, in th Prussian Catholic territory of Hohenzollern, founded by th brothers Abbots Maurus and Placid Wolter in 1868. Th similarity is due, partly to the fact that the Wolters elected t undergo their monastic training at Solesmes and so drew the inspiration mainly from Guéranger; partly to a likeness in th origin and circumstances of the two congregations. Solesm and Beuron were new starts, reconstitutions of Benedicti life in countries wherein it has died out through the upheava of the French Revolution. From these abbeys went forth a the communities that founded the various monasteries of th respective congregations, so that Solesmes and Beuron are a true sense the mother-houses of the congregations. The position as such is recognised by their constitutions, and the are given precedence and predominance, so that their abbo are ex officio the presidents of the congregations, with great powers, and more dominant position, and greater extern honours, than are enjoyed by the presidents of the older co gregations. The abbot of Solesmes is the 'superior genera and the abbot of Beuron has the title 'archabbot,' based o

the analogy of the ecclesiastical hierarchy (*Elementa*, p. 722). In both congregations an exact conformity to the mother-house in all matters of observance, discipline, spirit, is strictly enforced. The French Congregation was, in its original conception, the national congregation of France, but it has since Guéranger's time become international;[1] it has established, not as in exile but as permanent foundations, an abbey in Spain and one in England.[2] In the Beuron Congregation the international character is much more marked.

In all those features wherein the two congregations differ from the older ones—the mother-house whose abbot is permanent president, the enforcement of uniformity of observance with the mother-house, the international character—will be recognised, on a small scale, analogies to the origins of Citeaux and the Cistercian system, as already delineated. The analogy has not been explicitly drawn in the French Congregation; but in the Beuronese it has, and the organisation of the congregation has been consciously framed on the model of the 'Carta caritatis' of St Stephen Harding (see above, p. 239). This is to be seen in the declarations; and in Abbot Wolter's *Elementa* (pp. 723-30), the whole scheme of organisation is point by point explained and defended by citations from the 'Carta caritatis.' To Beuron and its abbot is given a position akin to that of Citeaux and its abbot in the Cistercian system. Beuron, like Citeaux, is the mother-house with permanent predominance, the norm and model of the life of all the houses, to which all have to conform.

There have been so many varieties in the polity and organisation of Benedictine congregations that yet another variety need cause no surprise: the only thing to be asked is, How does it work? But when the Cistercian system of the 'Carta caritatis' is proclaimed to be 'the true idea of a monastic congregation according to the mind of the Church,'[3] the reasons for such a claim call for examination, because after seven centuries of Black Monk congregational experiments, it

[1] Its title in Guéranger's constitutions, 1854, was 'Congregatio Gallica'; in those of 1894 it is called 'Congregatio S. Petri Solesmensis.'

[2] At the present day, in consequence of the Association Laws of 1901, the French monasteries are in exile in many lands.

[3] 'Unde forte argumentari licet, totam illius constitutionis (*scil.* Cartae caritatis) indolem ad veram monasticae congregationis ideam ex mente ecclesiae proprius accedere' (*Elementa*, p. 723).

is a novelty. The reason alleged is this: the Lateran decree ordains that at the first chapter held in each province (in huius novitatis primordiis) two Cistercian abbots are to be invited to preside in conjunction with two Black Monk abbots, as they are accustomed to the holding of such chapters and know the mode of procedure. To see in this provision an approval of the entire 'Carta caritatis,' as the mind of the Church in regard to Black Monk congregations, is to do violence to the tenor of the text, and to ignore the whole history of the efforts made at the time to carry the decree into effect. All Benedictine history, and all ecclesiastical legislation for Black Monks, with the single exception of the Beuronese constitutions, cries out against such a notion. However, in the *Elementa* the Cistercian system is applied in detail as the correct Benedictine theory, and the Beuron Congregation is deliberately organised on the lines of the 'Carta caritatis.' Moreover, like the Cistercians, the congregation is international: it is not merely the congregation of the Prussian dominions, in which it had its origin, and in which three of its monasteries are situated; nor even the congregation of the German Empire; but it has, or had before the War, two monasteries in Belgium, one in Austria, one in Bohemia, one in England, one in Portugal, and one in the Holy Land—and this not because of exile, but on principle, and on the analogy of the Cistercians.

Lastly, there is the Cassinese Congregation of 'Primitive Observance,' commonly called 'of Subiaco,' which is its head house, a secession in 1872 from the old Cassinese Congregation. This congregation is organised in national provinces, on the analogy of Dominicans, or Jesuits, or Redemptorists. Thus not only is there an Italian province alongside of the old Italian Cassinese congregation, but a French province alongside of the French national congregation, and an English province alongside of the English national congregation, and Belgian and Spanish provinces. Even the provinces are not national, but spread over the world: the Belgian province has monasteries in Holland and the Rhineland; the Spanish province has monasteries in Australia and the Philippine Islands; and the French province, not to speak of those in exile, has a monastery permanently established in England, one in the United States of America, one in the Argentina

and one in the Holy Land. Each province has its own provincial chapter and its own visitor, who is in effect a provincial. The president of the congregation, alone among Black Monk presidents, is not the abbot of one of the monasteries. He has the title of abbot general, and is in reality an effective general. He has around him a body of consultors, one for each province, just like the general of the Jesuits. The monks are not professed for a particular monastery, but for the province. At the Congress of Presidents in 1907 the abbot general found himself obliged for this reason to demur to the definition of stability accepted by the other presidents.

It is manifest that this congregation is not a congregation such as all the others are, but a fully organised order with centralised government. And not only in constitution and polity is it different from the other Benedictine congregations; in life also, and work, and to some extent even in ideals, it is markedly different from them, standing, as its name denotes, for a return to the keeping of the letter of the Rule, particularly in regard to night office at two a.m., and abstinence from meat.

From the foregoing sketch it appears that the Lateran idea of nationality as the basis of Benedictine congregations, kept inviolate outside of the Cluny system, has been broken in the last half-century: though there are six abbeys of Black monks in Belgium, there is no Belgian congregation, but there are monasteries of the German Congregation of Beuron, and of the Italian Congregation of Subiaco; while in England, in addition to the monasteries of the English Congregation, are others, founded permanently, not because of expulsions, belonging to the congregations of Subiaco, Beuron, and France.

In the constitution of Benedictine congregations the thing that matters vitally is the nature of the president's office and the position and powers he holds, which must be so defined as not to interfere with the autonomy of the abbeys or the jurisdiction of the abbots. On this point the Codex of Canon Law defines that 'the superior of a monastic congregation has not all the power and jurisdiction which the common law gives to major superiors; but his power and jurisdiction are to be gathered from the constitutions of the congregation and the

peculiar decrees of the Holy See' (can. 501, § 3). Though in codes of constitutions that have passed out of use the president often was given a position little compatible with the principles of the Rule, in all existing constitutions there are provisions safeguarding the essentials of the independent life of the monasteries and the paternal authority of the abbots. Still, we find in them various grades of authority given to the president. Not to speak of the Hungarian Congregation, in which the abbot of Pannonhalma is not only president, but the one abbot in the proper sense, and the only real superior of all the monks; in the Subiaco Congregation the abbot general has status and powers approaching those of the general in other orders. In the French Congregation the abbot of Solesmes, and in the Beuronese the abbot of Beuron, are ex officio the president, and therefore presidents for life; and saving the proper jurisdiction of the abbots, they exercise over all the monks of the congregation 'a paternal power and jurisdiction both "in foro externo" and "in foro interno." In the other congregations the president has no such universal authority, his powers being limited to certain defined cases. In all he has the following functions: he convokes and presides at general chapter; he presides at elections of abbots; he is visitor of the congregation (sometimes with a co-visitor); he performs certain acts which in other orders the Codex entrusts to the general, as the dismissal of an incorrigible subject; and to him any one who considers he has been unjustly treated by his own abbot may appeal. In such an event he has the powers of a judge to try the case and give a decision; but an appeal is open from his judgement to general chapter. The president is forbidden by all constitutions to encroach on the jurisdiction of the abbots; for instance, by those of the English Congregation he is forbidden, except at the time of visitation, to exercise any act of jurisdiction in any abbey or dependency, other than his own, or over any subject of another abbot.

In all congregations, except the French, Beuronese (and Swiss), the president is elected by general chapter for periods of 3, or 4, or 6, or 8, or 12 years. It would be an entirely false analogy to argue from the case of the abbot to that of the president; the reasons for the perpetuity of St Benedict's

abbot have no place whatever in regard to the office of president. On the contrary, the essentially different nature of the office suggests rather a difference in its mode of tenure.

In all the congregations (except that of Subiaco, in which the provincial consultors constitute the abbot general's council) two abbots are elected by general chapter as assistants or visitors, who are the president's council, and perform jointly with him certain acts assigned by the Codex to the central governing body of other religious orders.

The functions of general chapter are much the same in all the congregations: to examine into the state of the congregation and the monasteries in spirituals and temporals; to maintain and promote observance and discipline; to hear appeals and pass judgement in cases brought before it; to consider suggestions and make bye-laws; in most cases, to elect the president and other congregational officials. The composition of chapter differs in different congregations; in some it is composed of the ruling abbots (or superiors) of the monasteries only; in some each community sends an elected delegate; in some certain of the higher congregational officials take part. The frequency of its celebration also differs: in most of the congregations it is celebrated every third or fourth year, in the Subiaco Congregation every eighth year.

In the matter of centralised organisation the congregations may be graded as follows:[1]

The Hungarian is in the highest degree centralised, being composed of a single monastic family under one superior with full jurisdiction, who is at once abbot of Pannonhalma and president;

The Subiaco Congregation is organised on the lines of the centralised international religious orders;

The French and Beuronese are constituted, the former less, the latter more, according to the ideas of the Cistercian 'Carta caritatis';

The Cassinese, English, Bavarian, and both American represent a more highly organised, and the two Austrian a less highly organised type of the Lateran system of congregation as developed on the Bursfeld method (see above, p. 242);

[1] What is here said is borne out by Abbot Molitor (§§ 266-73), whose treatment of the subject of congregations is of much interest.

Lastly, lowest in point of organisation, but highest i point of fidelity to old Benedictine ideas, is the Swiss Congre gation. It has a little volume of most excellent 'Notae' i explanation of the Rule, but no code of constitutions. In th notes mention is made of general chapter and visitation, bu nothing is said about them in detail; the president is spoke of, but there is no definition of his powers or functions. Abb Molitor recognises the special position of the Swiss Congrega tion; he says that it hardly goes beyond the lines of th national chapters of the 'Summi Magistri'; it is not a corpora tion, and the connexion between the monasteries is no mo than an extrinsic conjunction (*op. cit.* § 268). Benedictine may be glad that there is still in our day this survival of ol world Benedictinism; and may rejoice that it is justified b the solidly excellent results it achieves in the venerable abbey of Switzerland.

The diversity of constitutions, practices, ideas, revealed i the foregoing sketch as obtaining in the various branches the same order, will to many minds appear to be mere disorde To the legalistic mind it will no doubt be an offence that suc divergences should exist among those professing the one Rul Can they not all have their general chapters composed in th same way, and meeting at the same intervals? Cannot a the presidents be appointed in the same manner, and calle by the same title, and hold office for the same period? Y every one of these sets of constitutions has been approved b the Holy See within the past twenty years. After all, the anomalies are not more strange than the processes of natu are wont to be. And this is their secret. The Benedicti congregations have grown up; they have not been made order. Each bears the impress of its origin, country, rac history, work, environment; and so no two of them are alik On the one point that, constitutionally, is essential to fu Benedictine life, the autonomy of the monastic family each abbey, all existing constitutions are in accord; on a else they differ, almost indefinitely.

It was so that Cardinal Newman saw the Benedictin in history. 'Even when the whole monastic body w Benedictine, it was not on that account moulded upon o type, or dependent upon one centre. As it had not spread o

from one origin, so it neither was homogeneous in its construction, nor simple and concordant in its action. It propagated itself variously, and had much of local character in its secondary dispositions. We cannot be certain what it was in one place, by knowing what it was in another. One house attained more nearly to what may be called its normal idea than another' (*The Benedictine Centuries*, § 2; reprint, p. 110).

As Cardinal Gasquet says, 'the genius of Newman has caught the very spirit of St Benedict's followers, as manifested in the past' (*Sketch*, p. lv), when he thus characterises St Benedict's institute: 'Its spirit indeed is ever one, but not its outward circumstances. It is not an order proceeding from one mind at a particular date, and appearing all at once in its full perfection, and in its extreme development, and in form one and the same everywhere and from first to last, as is the case with other great religious institutions; but it is an organisation, diverse, complex, and irregular, and variously ramified, rich rather than symmetrical, with many origins and centres and new beginnings and the action of local influences, like some great natural growth; with tokens, on the face of it, of its being a divine work, not the mere creation of human genius. Instead of progressing on plan and system and from the will of a superior, it has shot forth and run out as if spontaneously, and has shaped itself according to events, from an irrepressible fulness of life within, and from the energetic self-action of its parts, like those symbolical creatures in the prophet's vision, which "went every one of them straight forward, whither the impulse of the spirit was to go." It has been poured out over the earth, rather than been sent, with a silent mysterious operation, while men slept, and through the romantic adventures of individuals, which are well-nigh without record; and thus it has come down to us, not risen up among us, and is found rather than established' (*Mission of St Benedict*, § 6; reprint, p. 42).

# CHAPTER XVI

## 'THE ORDER OF ST BENEDICT'

THE terms 'Order of St Benedict' and 'Benedictine Orde are used in common parlance, just like 'Order of St Domini and 'Dominican Order,' and they have entered into the offic language of the Church. What is meant by calling t Dominicans, or the Jesuits, an 'order' is perfectly well und stood; but it often is not understood, even by people w usually understand these things, that though the convenie term 'Benedictine Order' is freely used, the Benedictines not form an order in the common acceptation of the wor The idea of an order is usually derived from the great centr ised international religious orders. By an induction fr their characteristic features as they exist in the world I el where framed the following definition or description of su an order: 'An organised corporate body, composed of seve houses, diffused through various lands, with centralised gove ment, and objects and methods of its own; which is in t Church as "imperium in imperio."'[2] After what has been s in the preceding chapter, an order such as this the Be dictines manifestly are not.

But the Codex of Canon Law gives a simpler and m general definition: 'An order is a "religion" in which sole vows are taken' (can. 488). According to this definition Benedictines certainly are an order. Furthermore, when consider the definition, given in the same place, of a 'religi —'a society wherein the members, according to the laws pro to that society, take public vows and tend to perfection'—

[1] I am not able to say when the expression 'Order of St Benedict' came into use; certainly not until the late Middle Ages, when the variet orders arose. The use of 'O.S.B.' is quite modern, hardly common (I beli before the nineteenth century. The older title was 'Benedictine monk' of a monastery, or such a congregation, abridged into 'mon. Ben.' or 'm. b.'

[2] *Encyc. Brit.* art. 'Monasticism.'

question arises, whether each individual Benedictine congregation be not an order, for each has its laws or constitutions proper to itself. This was Abbot Molitor's view, even before these definitions of the Codex: 'Each Benedictine congregation considered in itself possesses the rights of a true and perfect order' (*Capita Selecta*, § 126). This position may now be confirmed from the Codex. For the abbot superior of a monastic congregation, though he has not all the power and jurisdiction of the 'supreme moderator' or general of other religious orders (can. 501), still is entrusted by the Codex with certain of the functions (e.g. judicial) of generals. He has a seat at Ecumenical Councils with full rights of voting (can. 223). A monastic congregation, like a diocese or exempt order, has no superior below the Pope (can. 1557). And each Benedictine congregation has, or has the right to have, its own procurator in Curia Romana to transact its own business with the Holy See, as will be seen just now. Thus it appears that in the case of Benedictines the term 'order' in the strict and full sense applies primarily to the separate congregations, and only secondarily and by analogy to the entire Benedictine institute.

Until 1893 the congregations existed side by side without any bond between them, or any semblance of a central authority. But in that year Leo XIII established a great common college in Rome where young monks of all the congregations should pursue their theological studies together, and he made the abbot of this college 'Abbot Primate' of all the Black Monk congregations. The position of the abbot primate is recognised in various places in the Codex: he is named first among the major superiors, and he has a seat at Ecumenical Councils. But of any power or jurisdiction, all that is said concerning him is what is said also of presidents of monastic congregations, that 'he has not got all the power and jurisdiction that are given by common law to generals of orders, but his power and jurisdiction are to be determined from the special constitutions and the particular decrees of the Holy See (can. 501). The Codex, therefore, leaves the primate's office and position just as they were regulated by the legislation of 1893. I do not know of any place where this legislation has been set forth as a whole, or the process of

the making of the primate related, so it will be of interest, and perhaps of use, to make a study of the documents and place them in their historical setting.

In the year 1886 Leo XIII determined to reorganise and reopen as a theological college for all Black Benedictines the old Cassinese Collegium Anselmianum;[1] and on January 4th, 1887, he addressed a letter on the subject to the Cassinese Benedictine, Archbishop Dusmet of Catania, wherein occurred these words: 'As the forces of those who are united together are stronger, the hope of better things in the future will be much firmer if the various members of the Benedictine order, scattered far and wide, were to coalesce as if into one body, with one and the same laws, and one and the same government'; and the hope is expressed that the common college would gradually bring about such a coming together and conjunction of the Black Benedictine congregations into one body.[2] These words were looked on at the time in Benedictine circles as ominous; it was feared that they adumbrated some such piece of unification as Leo XIII effected in the case of Franciscans and Trappists. And there can be no doubt that some such scheme was in his mind. However, in the interval between 1887 and 1893 he happily decided, or was persuaded, to give up the idea. Nothing more was heard of the matter until 1893, when in April a meeting of all Black Benedictine abbots was convoked at Rome, for the laying of the foundation stone of the new Collegio S. Anselmo on the Aventine. Archbishop Dusmet, now Cardinal, in the Pope's name, laid before the abbots a series of articles concerning the proposed creation of an abbot primate and the organisation of the Collegio S. Anselmo, and invited them to discuss the proposals and submit a scheme embodying the results of their deliberations. In his address he interpreted the words of January 1887 as meaning that

[1] The Collegium Anselmianum of the Cassinese Congregation was founded in 1687 and flourished till the middle of the last century. The professors were bound, under pain of deprivation, to teach scholastic theology according to the doctrine of St Anselm. The college was intended primarily for students of the Italian Congregation, but it was open to Benedictines of other nationalities, though in fact none seem ever to have gone to it. Its most illustrious student was Pius VII. Accounts will be found in *Downside Review*, 1901, and *Revue Bénédictine*, 1887.

[2] The letter was printed in the *Studien und Mittheilungen O.S.B.*, 1887, pp. 103-4.

'out of the federated families [*scil.* congregations] a certain society be formed and maintained, which should respect and preserve the special and even national character of each family, and the statutes of each of them.'[1] The first article was the one that really mattered, so it will be given in full, the original form and the form in which it emerged from the abbots' consultations being printed in parallel columns.

| ORIGINAL ARTICLES | DELIBERATIONS |
|---|---|
| | (*Studien*, 1893, pp. 294, 295) |
| | All the congregations of Black Benedictines enter on a true fraternal confederation, which confederation does not subject any congregation to another, *and does not introduce into the individual congregations any jurisdiction on the part of any superior which did not previously exist.* |
| | But that this confederation may have some *representative* with the Holy See, |
| All the congregations of Black Benedictines remaining intact, | all the aforesaid congregations of Benedictines remaining intact, as also their constitutions or declarations, |
| and keeping each one of them its own archabbot, or abbot general, or abbot president, as also its procurator general and visitors, | and keeping each one of them its own archabbot, or abbot general, or abbot president, as also its procurator general and visitors, and also the rights and privileges of each monastery remaining intact, |
| an abbot primate of all the congregations shall be created, who will reside at Rome for businesses concerning the well-being of the whole order. | a *representative* of all the congregations shall be created, who will reside at Rome for businesses directly concerning the well-being of the whole order. |

The other articles may be summarised: they relate to the mode of election of the primate and the organisation of the

[1] All the documents connected with this meeting, and an account of the proceedings, are printed in *Studien und Mittheilungen O.S.B.*, 1893, pp. 279-301.

College of S. Anselmo. According to the original schem proposed to the abbots, the primate should be elected for period of twelve years, by the presidents of the congregation assembled in Rome for the purpose; the abbots said, by th presidents of congregations and abbots ruling monasteries According to the original scheme, there were to be two quit distinct offices: the primate, who was nothing else tha primate, and should have his residence at S. Anselmo; and th rector, who was superior of the College of S. Anselmo. Th abbots made the essential office to be that of abbot of th College of S. Anselmo, with ordinary jurisdiction, whose officia the rector should be; and suppressing the title of primate, the made the abbot of S. Anselmo the 'Representant' of th congregations at Rome, but without any semblance of juris diction in the congregations. Thus, what the abbots ha done, in effect and in intention, was to eliminate the primat both in name and in fact.[1]

The abbots' schema was duly presented to the Pope, an in July the brief 'Summum semper' was issued.[2] The abbot suggestions were all accepted—only the primate was replaced The title 'abbot primate' was restored, and he was declare to hold the double office of primate and abbot of S. Anselm In the first article, printed above, the abbots' preamble wa adopted, but the important passage in italics was cut out; an the next clause reads, 'that this confederation may hav some unity, all' etc.

It was a compromise. If the abbots failed to avert th institution of a primate, they succeeded in emphasising an safeguarding the independence of the congregations and the monasteries; and they secured that the primate, instea of being merely a primate, living in Rome, with no outlet f his activities except to look after the well-being of the orde should be a very busy man, engaged on the responsible an taxing work of organising and running a great internation college.

In the 'Summum semper,' as in the abbots' suggestion

[1] This appears not only on the face of the documents, but in an account the congress written by one of the members.

[2] Besides in the official collections, *Acta S. Sedis* and *Acta Leonis XIII* is printed in the *Studien und Mittheilungen O.S.B.* and the *Revue Bénédict* of 1893.

all that is said concerning the office and functions of the primate, as such, is that he is 'to reside at Rome for businesses directly concerning the well-being of the whole order.' But it was said that the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars would define the primate's position and his rights and functions in regard to the entire order.

This was done by a decree, 'Inaestimabilis,' of September 1893.[1] The primate's position is defined under the following heads:

(1) 'In order that his pre-eminence (praelatio) be not empty,' the presidents of the congregations have each to send him every five years a report of the moral and material state of his congregation, 'so that the condition of the entire order may be known to him.'

(2) If doubts or dissensions arise between presidents, or between abbots of a congregation, that cannot be settled within the congregation, recourse is to be had to the primate, who shall do his utmost, with paternal charity, to compose the dispute.

(3) But if there be urgent necessity for a visitation of one of the congregations, he has the right of making a visitation, with all the precedence and honours of a visitor, in person or by a deputy; 'and if it be matter of questions which cannot be peaceably settled, and which do not admit of delay, in cases really urgent, in presence of necessity, he shall on the spot decree what he thinks right in the Lord, and shall afterwards make a report to the Holy See.'

(4) Finally 'he has to watch and take care that in each one of the congregations regular discipline be maintained.'

There has been no further legislation in regard to the primate;[2] consequently, by Codex (can. 501) his power and jurisdiction are as set forth above. It will, therefore, be not without interest to study closely these provisions; nor without importance, in view of much loose thought and misunderstanding as to their import, not only on the part of those who have no special knowledge or interest in the matter, but

[1] Curiously, this decree was not printed, like the other documents, in either of the Benedictine periodicals.

[2] To be quite accurate, the Codex lays on him the duty of sending in, every five years, a report to the Holy See (can. 510).

also on the part of Benedictines: as when Benedictine write speak of the primate as a superior general, and say that th action of Leo XIII has in effect made the Benedictines trul an order.[1]

The first article of 'Inaestimabilis' clearly gives th primate no power or jurisdiction. Nor does the second; h can only do his best, with paternal charity, to bring about settlement of a dispute referred to him, but without power pronounce a decision as judge or arbiter. The fourth artic makes him in a vague way responsible for regular disciplii in all the congregations, but supplies no means for enforcir it. It is only in regard to the third article that there ca be question of any jurisdiction conferred on the primat and as Abbot Molitor (*op. cit.* § 266) says that by it he w made visitor of the Black Monk congregations, it is hece sary to examine if this be really the case. He certainly not the ordinary visitor, for by the various constitutio the president is the ordinary visitor; nor is he extraordina visitor, for he has not the customary powers of a visitor deal with the cases that may arise: only in the case of real emergency[2] may he give a decision, and then he h to report it to the Holy See. From this analysis it is to gathered that the only definite power given to the prima by the 'Inaestimabilis' is this: Should he be satisfied th the regular discipline in any of the congregations were su as to make a visitation urgently necessary, he would have t right to make a visitation of that congregation; but apa from such an emergency as he is empowered to deal with the spot, he could only report to the Holy See the result the visitation, and (presumably) ask for instructions.

Everyone must be struck by the vagueness of all th a vagueness strangely unlike the usual precision of Rom legislation—so unlike as to bear in on the mind the sense th it was intentional. And so it surely was. There can be lit doubt that in 1887 Leo XIII contemplated a real unificati of the Benedictines with a real general at the head. Thou

[1] Dom J. Besse, *Moine Bénédictin*, 1898, p. 34; Dom J. de Hemptin *Notice sur l'Ordre de S. Benoît*, 1910, *passim*.

[2] The manner in which the emergency is reiterated is very striking: casibus vere urgentibus, quae dilationem non patiantur, attenta necessitate.'

he abandoned such a project, he did not wholly divest himself of the idea of bringing the congregations in some way together. How this could be done seems never to have been thought out; hence the articles proposed to the abbots in 1893 were a vague compromise. But the fact that the novel title of abbot primate was devised for the head is an indication that the character of his office was intended to be sought from the analogies of the primate among the bishops of a country, who is without jurisdiction over them (Codex, can. 271), not from the analogies of the general of an order.

When we turn to consider the actual working of the office of primate during the quarter of a century that has elapsed since its creation in 1893, it has to be said that, apart from S. Anselmo, there has been only a single instance of what is defined by the 'Summum semper' as the primate's primary function, 'a business directly concerning the well-being of the whole order'; this was the reform of the calendar and rubrics of the breviary, to bring them into harmony with the spirit of Pius X's reforms of the Roman breviary, which for Benedictines issued in a restoration of the office very nearly to what it was in St Benedict's day. This was in the years 1914-16, and on that occasion the advantage of there being some one who could act in the name of all the congregations, after consultation with them, was felt. But, as has been said, this is the only case of a business concerning the whole confederation of congregations directly. For the rest, the primate's activities, as primate and in regard to the order as a whole, have been limited to the obtaining of privileges, as the 'cappa magna' for the presidents of the congregations, and various indulgences. And this poverty of results is not accidental; it arises from the very nature of things; the character of the congregations, their divergent works, and the independence secured to them by the 'Summum semper,' making it well-nigh impossible, except on the rarest occasions, that there should be anything directly affecting them all. As for the power of visitation given the primate by the 'Inaestimabilis,' I believe it has never been exercised; the late primate made a visitation of the English Congregation and, I think, of at least one other; but he came as Apostolic Visitor specially commissioned by the Holy See for the purpose.

Thus prescinding from his office as abbot of S. Anselm the functions of the primate, precisely as such, as defined b the 'Summum semper' and the 'Inaestimabilis,' and re-asserte by the Codex as the law regulating the exercise of his offic have during these twenty-five years been singularly barren.

But quite outside the rights and duties assigned to him a primate, he has exercised a far-reaching influence on man congregations and monasteries in ways nowhere contemplate in the documents establishing the office. He has, naturall and inevitably, come to be employed by the Roman Congreg tions as the ordinary consultor in Benedictine affairs; so th Benedictine businesses usually pass through his hands, and h votum is likely to carry great weight and even be decisive all Benedictine cases in Rome. It is coming to be recognise that the quickest way of getting business transacted in Ron is through him, rather than through the official procurator curia of the various congregations; as sooner or later, in a case, the matter is sure to be referred to him. Thus he h come to wield an enormous unofficial or semi-official influen in Benedictine affairs, and to have powers of controlling t destinies of congregations and monasteries in ways never co templated, or at least never expressed, in the instrumer creating the office. Rescripts and dispensations commor contain the clause 'audito voto rm̃i abbatis primatis,' and t execution of them is often given to the primate rather th to the president of the congregation in question, though t latter, as the superior of a monastic congregation with an dependent status recognised by the Codex, would seem to the natural authority to give effect to the decree. More th this: in some congregations the election of an abbot is confirm by the president 'in the name of the Holy See,' in others goes to Rome for confirmation; in the latter case elections abbots of monasteries have been submitted to the primate, a the confirmation has contained the clause 'with the primat approbation.'

This tendency on the part of the officials of the Rom Congregations is easily understood. They have not, canr be expected to have, any knowledge or appreciation of t niceties of Benedictine history, traditions, ideas, spirit. Th conception of an 'order' is derived from the centralised ord

whose governing body is at Rome. An order whose various branches have different laws and regulations and practices seems an anomaly, and is an offence to the official and the legal mind. The officials at Rome naturally like to have a single superior in Rome with whom they can deal on all Benedictine affairs, to whom they can turn for advice on every point that arises, rather than deal with a dozen procurators and presidents. Probably many of them think it would be a good thing were the Benedictines unified and centralised like the others. This is but natural. Usually when things have been explained, they see otherwise and understand them in their true bearing.

A telling illustration of the tendencies just spoken of is forthcoming. In 1906, in face mainly of practical problems relating to S. Anselmo, the late primate, Abbot de Hemptinne, asked the Holy See to be allowed to call the presidents to Rome every six years to take counsel for the good of the order and of S. Anselmo. The answer was that he might do so, 'that having taken counsel together they may enact and decree whatever may be for the good of the order and of S. Anselmo.' The primate carefully limited the functions of the meeting to 'consulting,' 'taking counsel' (consulerent, consiliaturos). But in the eyes of the Congregation of Religious, altogether naturally, the meeting was a general chapter of the order, and like the general chapter of the Franciscans or Dominicans would of course legislate for the order; so the meeting of presidents was empowered to 'enact and decree' (statuant atque decernant) whatever might be for the good of the order. It is not to be supposed for a moment that there was any intention of tearing to pieces the 'Summum semper'; but this would be the practical effect. For if a chapter of presidents has the power of legislating for the order in whatever way they think right, it is an end of the independence of the congregations so carefully asserted and safeguarded in the 'Summum semper.'

The primate, I cannot help saying, unfortunately, instead of pointing out the incidence of the Rescript before publication, accepted the situation it created, and emphasised and developed it in the letter (Feb. 2, 1907) whereby he announced to the abbots the coming congress of presidents. He affirmed that the presidents have inherited something of the jurisdiction

which the bishops used to exercise over the monasteries before they were exempt, and that they possess supreme power (suprema gaudent potestate); and he described the object of the congress to be, that the presidents along with the primate 'may freely decree (libere decernant) about everything that concerns the good of the whole order.'

The presidents when they met refused to accept the position offered to them. At the outset they declared that their deliberations had a consultative rather than obligatory character; that the autonomy of the abbeys was the foundation of the order; that the congregations should be kept intact according to the nature and constitutions of each: all which was repeated in the declarations with which they closed their proceedings. Moreover, in the course of the deliberations it was declared that the presidents have not jurisdiction over the different abbeys of their congregations.[1]

Certain tendencies, and what is more important, certain ideas are revealed in this episode, which, being living ideas, it will be to the purpose to bring to the bar of Benedictine principle and tradition.

In the first place there is apparent a tendency to exalt the dignity and position of the presidents of the congregations. Thus it was said that they in some measure hold the place in regard to abbeys of their congregation that used to be held by the diocesan bishops. There is no need to examine this theory here, because it has been combated and refuted by Abbot Molitor (*op. cit.* § 435), who declares that, so far from the presidents enjoying supreme power in their congregations, 'their authority almost wholly depends on the consent of the general chapter.'

By the articles proposed to the abbots in 1893 the election of the primate was to be made by the presidents of congregations, to assemble in Rome every twelve years for the purpose, and also for businesses concerning the well-being of the whole order. The abbots in their suggestions joined to the presidents 'all the ruling abbots, as far as may be possible'; and the amendment was adopted in the 'Summum semper.' Here the abbots were right, in point both of Benedictine theory and of history. In point of theory:

[1] *Protocollum*, 6, 7, 24.

because the essential Benedictine units are, as the presidents defined, the monastic families existing in the individual abbeys; whereas the congregations are accidental assemblages of families. In point of history: because there are historical precedents for congresses of abbots, as the great meeting at Aachen in 817, and those held under the Lateran decree; but there are none for a congress of presidents. So far as I know, the idea was first mooted by Abbot Wolter on the last page of his *Elementa*. In the 'Summum semper,' thanks to the abbots' representations, the thing was put on the only sound Benedictine footing.

It may have been noticed that in some of the documents that have come under review the congregations are spoken of as the 'Benedictine families.' This usage of the term 'family' is incorrect. Abbot Wolter, indeed, advocated the view that each congregation should have a 'patriarchal' organisation as a greater family (*Elementa*, p. 719 *sqq.*); but his whole theory is based on the Cistercian 'Carta caritatis,' and could respond to the realities of nature only in two or three modern congregations in which the various communities have gone forth from a mother-house. In all present congregations whose houses existed before the nineteenth century, the monasteries were founded independently and were prior to the congregation, and in them there can be no question of filiation or of family. In this again I have the support of Abbot Molitor, who lays down that only where there has been filiation and consequent cognation among the monasteries can a congregation be regarded as in a wider sense a family; in the majority of cases there is mere federation (*op. cit.* § 273)[1]; nor does the Lateran decree contemplate anything more than this. If any term has to be sought from the analogies of sociology, the proper one for the congregations would be 'tribes,' not families, tribes being associations of separate families: but pressed beyond a certain point analogies are apt to become fantastic.

Behind the tendency to exalt the presidents' office is the idea of a 'monastic hierarchy,' on the analogy of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which seems to haunt some minds. It was put out in Abbot Wolter's *Elementa* (p. 721), and it appeared in the letters convening the congress of 1907, wherein the

[1] He points out theoretical inconveniences in the system of filiation.

purpose of the meeting was said to be 'that the presidents may be the interpreters of their congregations to the primate and the "oracles" of the primate at the general chapters of their congregations.'[1] Here we have a clearly defined hierarchy: primate, presidents, abbots. Such a hierarchy exists in the centralised orders, where general, provincials, and local superiors really do represent descending grades of power, authority, jurisdiction. But among Benedictines it is just the opposite, as Abbot Molitor points out (*op. cit.* §§ 272, 443). The monastic families of the abbeys are the real entities, the juridical persons in the literal sense; the congregations are accidental coalitions of monasteries loosely bound together; the 'true fraternal confederation' of the congregations is a shadowy abstraction. And the real authority and position of the respective superiors is graded according to the grade of reality of the institutes. By far the fullest and most real is the authority of the abbots, who have their jurisdiction direct from the Holy See. Next comes the authority of the presidents, received in most cases from general chapter, defined by constitutions, and limited in exercise to certain infrequent occasions. The primate's authority, as has been seen, is by law as vague as the confederation of which he is head is shadowy. Thus among Benedictines the hierarchy of jurisdiction is the inverse of the hierarchy of dignity (ordine quasi inverso: Molitor, *op. cit.* § 272, d).

If it be asked: What, after twenty-five years' experience, is to be thought of the movement initiated by Leo XIII in 1893, with the object of bringing the Black Monk congregations into relation with one another? it has to be answered that the portion of the scheme relating to the creation of a great international Benedictine college in Rome has responded adequately to the great Pontiff's desires. S. Anselmo was a great success, a great creation. At the death of the first primate in 1913, the students numbered a hundred, drawn from all the congregations, and a staff of (in most cases) highly competent professors, all Benedictines, had been formed. This result must be credited to the Pope, who had conceived the idea and also in generous measure financed it; but even

[1] 'Oracula': surely a strange word to use, suggesting, as it does, the unintelligent utterance of words supplied by a higher power.

more to Abbot Hildebrand de Hemptinne, the first primate, to whose strong personality, courageous faith, and rare gifts as a ruler of men, the building up of S. Anselmo's was due. That the picked young monks of the various abbeys should be put through a good course of higher theological studies together was a good thing; that they should be subjected to the educative forces of a residence in Rome, with the opportunities the journeys afforded of seeing the artistic treasures and historical monuments of Italy, was also good; but best of all was it that these young men of all congregations and nationalities should live together, should come to know and appreciate one another and form friendships that outlived the years at S. Anselmo. For thus the barriers of national isolation were broken down, and the young monks carried back to their own abbeys not only a better theological formation, but a widened outlook and perhaps vistas of ideas they would not have perceived at home. In time they naturally became abbots, and now most of the younger Benedictine abbots are Anselmiani. So in all these ways Pope Leo's college has achieved most happy and beneficent results, and for it all we owe a deep debt of gratitude to him and also to Abbot de Hemptinne, for probably no other man possessed the combination of qualities necessary to make the college the working success it was. And when I think of the S. Anselmo I saw in 1913, full of life and promise and fruitfulness, and reflect that it is one of the living things utterly dissolved and broken by the War, and wonder how long it must be before it can be reconstructed on its old lines, I confess I am filled with sadness.

But when we consider the other portion of Pope Leo's scheme, the idea of bringing together the congregations into some kind of confederation, we are confronted with a sense of failure. Apart from S. Anselmo and the personal relations established there, it cannot be said that there are any closer bonds between the congregations than there were in 1893. Nor in the nature of things Benedictine can there be. The phrases used—the 'true fraternal confederation,' the 'certain consociation'—lack reality. So too does the declaration of the presidents in 1907, when, after asserting in very real terms the autonomy of the abbeys and the independence of the congregations, they go on to say that all are to 'regard (prosequi) the primate as the

centre of unity,' and 'to adhere to him as the centre who is t safeguard the rights of the order and foster unity.'[1] So lon as the 'Summum semper' holds, and the congregations hav their own several constitutions and their full independenc as secured to them by it, it is hard to see how any actuall working confederation is possible of such an amorphous cor geries of congregations as those of the Black Benedictin have been seen to be.

It has to be recognised frankly that each system of gover ment has its strengths and its weaknesses. Benedictii strength lies in the strength of strong abbeys with the autonomous families here and there over the face of the lan The weakness is the weakness of isolation; it lies in tl difficulty of these independent units combining for concert action in order to carry through some great undertaking. It not easy for Benedictines, especially in the old congregatior in which the house spirit is strong, to carry on a work th is beyond the resources of the single abbey. Hardly can tl houses of a Benedictine congregation combine, as can tho of a province in a centralised order, for such common pu pose as, for instance, the working of a vicariate on the Forei Mission. Still less is it possible to bring the full Benedicti forces to bear on a point, in order to carry out some gre work. Benedictine effort, by the very genius of the institu must needs be limited to the capacities of the single mon teries. Common undertakings are not natural for Benedictin 'Non omnia possumus omnes.' Benedictines have done th own sort of work in the world, for Church and State, in th own sort of way. That work they can go on doing. But order to make them able to do other kinds of works in otl kinds of ways, it would be necessary to change them.

There may be those who think that Benedictines ha merely lagged behind in the great world process of gene centralisation going on around them, and that they would all the better, and certainly more convenient, were th organised like the other orders. It is true that, as the res of their native lack of organisation, Benedictine influence l never been able to make itself felt as a single definite pov in politics, whether ecclesiastical or secular. Yet for all th

[1] *Protocollum*, 7, 24.

disadvantages, they have wielded an influence of their own both in Church and State, and there are good reasons for believing that this special kind of influence of Benedictines in the world is not in spite of, but because of, their decentralised estate. In the following striking passage Cardinal Gasquet seems to touch the deeper side of things: 'In the ordinary course of human affairs the means whereby great and wide-reaching results are achieved is the concentrated effort of a directed organism. As the mind passes in review the action of the monastic order in the past centuries, it cannot but be struck by the fact that, whilst the Benedictines have indeed achieved a work which has left its enduring impress on the religious and social history of Europe, their history is specifically characterised by a want of definite organisation. The explanation of this apparent contradiction between great achievement and the neglect of that which human prudence would have dictated as necessary for attaining any great and permanent result is easy. St Benedict grasped fully in things divine the law of contradiction, which is the surest basis of the Christian life and effort—a law which lies on the surface of the Gospel story, and is confirmed by the deeper considerations which are rooted in the Gospel teaching. It issued in the contradiction of the Cross, and found its expression in such words of our Lord as, "He that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it." The results achieved by the monastic order have not been obtained by the exercise of power, but of influence. Their action upon society was that of the personal influence of the family, not that of the impersonal agency of the State' (*Sketch*, liii).

These reflections are prompted by what is an undoubted fact, that centralisation will be at all times a danger threatening Benedictines. It is the spirit of the age in Church and State alike; all the other great orders are strongly centralised; the appointment of the primate is a visible step in the direction and certainly makes the process more easy; the natural tendency of the course of business at Rome, even if it be mere drifting, all flows the same way. Certain it is that an ambitious primate who should want to make himself a general, would find great facilities ready to hand; and human affairs being what they are, sooner or later such an one will arise. Therefore

it behoves all Benedictines, the abbots especially and the presidents, and above all the primate himself, intellectually to grip and loyally to safeguard the great fundamental principles of Benedictine government and polity, flowing from the Rule itself, so well enunciated by the presidents in 1907.

Meantime we may be grateful, and may rejoice, that after twenty-five years of the experiment, no signs of centralisation have shown themselves. The congregations still flourish under their own constitutions and observances, in the full independence secured to them by the 'Summum semper.' In witness whereof I may be allowed to quote words I sent to the *Tablet* from the great congress of nearly a hundred Benedictine abbots assembled in Rome at Pentecost, 1913, for the election of a new primate:

'The constitutions, observance, external works of the different Benedictine congregations vary greatly according to the history and conditions of life and work of each, and the national temperament and needs of the different countries in which they are—vary as much as the cut and fashion of the habits worn by the abbots now assembled at St Anselmo: leather belts, cloth belts, silk sashes; collars of every kind, or none at all; hoods of many shapes, or none at all—yet all evidently the one Benedictine habit. These variations of the same habit fitly symbolise that multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity which is the characteristic, and the power, of St Benedict's institute, and responds so truly to the spirit and the history of his Rule. And so the abbots now assembled in what is surely the greatest meeting of Benedictine abbots since medieval times, feel in conversing with each other and exchanging the ideas and experiences of many lands, that for all the differences of nationality and work and life and observance, and even in some measure of ideals, the underlying unity is greater and more powerful far than the surface differences, and that all the various congregations of Benedictines are uttering to the modern world St Benedict's message, and are handing on, each in its own sphere, the fundamental traditions, ideals, spirit, influence that went forth from Monte Cassino fourteen hundred years ago.'

# CHAPTER XVII

## DAILY LIFE IN ST BENEDICT'S MONASTERY

THE remaining chapters will be concerned with the exterior side of the life, the Benedictines in history, their works and influence on mankind. As the point of departure, we must form a true idea of the actual daily life lived by St Benedict's own monks at Monte Cassino.

The title of this chapter suggests a picturesque account of the life of the primitive Benedictines. Such a picture of the daily life of a Benedictine monastery in the early Middle Ages has been drawn by Dom G. Morin in a series of articles, 'Journée d'un Moine,' in the *Revue Bénédictine*, 1889. What follows here will be nothing of the kind, but a dry technical statement of facts and figures, a quite prosaic attempt to determine the 'horarium' for the different seasons as fixed by the Rule. And rightly so; for if any one tries to describe the tenor of his life, he naturally begins with a bald statement of his horarium—his hours of rising, work, meals, recreation, retiring —as the framework in which his daily life is cast, and the necessary basis of any appreciation of its character. Similarly, the preliminary step to an attempt to reconstruct a picture of the daily life in St Benedict's monastery must be the determining of the horarium. For this it is necessary to understand the method of computing the time in use in his day. It was that of the Romans, and is explained in the dictionaries and manuals of classical antiquities; the Excursus on 'Clocks' in Becker's *Gallus* may perhaps be named as adequate and easily accessible.

The method was as follows. The day, i.e. the period from sunrise to sunset, was divided into twelve equal 'horae,' and likewise the night, or period from sunset to sunrise, into twelve equal 'horae.'[1] It is evident that only at the equinoxes,

[1] There were other methods of reckoning the time in vogue with the Romans. The day and night were divided into 24 equal hours, from midnight to midnight,

(March 25 and September 24) would the day 'horae' and night 'horae' be of the same duration, i.e. 60 minutes e like our mean or equinoctial hours: in the summer-half of year a day hour was longer than a night hour, and in winter-half a night hour was longer than a day hour. M over, as the times of sunrise and sunset depend on latitude, length of the hours of day and night on any given date wc differ in different latitudes. The latitude of Monte Cassin near enough to that of Rome to allow us to take the Ro hours as practically those of Monte Cassino, so that a Ro almanac will serve our purpose.

At Rome the longest day is 15 of our equinoctial ho and consequently on it a day-hour was 75 of our minutes; shortest day is 9 equinoctial hours, and consequently o a day-hour was 45 minutes; for the night these figures reversed. This will become plainer when we apply it tc Benedict's provisions. His first reference to the horariu in c. VIII,[1] where he says that during the winter, viz. f November 1 to Easter, the monks are to rise for the night o at the eighth hour of the night, 'octava hora noctis surgen est.' What hour is this, according to our method of recko time? The figures that follow have not been calculated an astronomical exactitude, but have been more or less 'rou off'; but the results are quite accurate enough for the pur in hand. I do not know of any other place where they been worked out in the same detail.

On November 1 in Rome the sun sets at 4.45 and ris 6.30, so that the night is 13¾ of our hours, and the Ro night-hours were of 69 minutes: thus—

the first hour of the night was 4.45—5.54 p.m
the second hour of the night was 5.54—7.3 „

. . . . . .

the eighth hour of the night was 12.48—1.57 a.m

or (as still survives in popular use in some parts of Italy) from sunset to Some commentators have held that St Benedict followed either of these sy But the fact that he has an 'eighth hour of the night' (c. VIII), and a 'eighth hour of the day' (c. XLVIII), and calls midday 'the sixth hour,' m quite clear he followed the method described above in the text. This is Delatte's view also (*Commentaire*), and indeed the whole tenor of the pr tions of the Rule shows that the horarium followed the changes of the sun

[1] The chapters of the Rule regulating the horarium are principally VI XLII, XLVIII.

so that the end of the eighth hour of the night was approximately our 2 a.m.

Let us now see how it was at midwinter. On Christmas Day the sun sets at Rome at 4.30 and rises at 7.30, so that the night is 15 hours duration, and the Roman night-hours were of 75 minutes. Thus—

the first hour of the night was 4.30—5.45 p.m.
the second hour of the night was 5.45—7 „
. . . . . .
the eighth hour of the night was 1.15—2.30 a.m.

From Christmas the close of the eighth hour of the night gradually reverted to 2 a.m. on March 25, the equinox. In case of a late Easter, about April 20, sunset would be about 6.45 and sunrise about 5.15; so that the night was about 10½ hours, and the Roman night-hour about 53 minutes duration. Consequently the eighth hour of the night was from about 12.56 to 1.49 a.m. After Easter till November 1 the hour for rising to the night office was fixed on another principle, to be explained presently.

But first we must inquire what St Benedict meant when he said 'they are to rise at the eighth hour.' We have seen that the eighth hour was one of the twelve equal periods into which the night was divided; but in the words just cited it does not mean a period, but a point of time, or, as we should say, 'at eight.' But what this expression 'at eight' meant for the Romans is, says Becker, 'a question difficult of solution'; and he cites authorities that seem to show a divergence as to whether 'eight' meant the commencement or the end of the eighth hour. The commentators on the Rule are much exercised by the passage, most of them striving to twist it into conformity with the ideas and practices in vogue in their own circles. Fortunately there is no ambiguity at all in St Benedict's usage of the terms denoting time. He uses the expression 'tertia plena,' 'decima plena' (c. XLVIII, 33, 34), to signify the completion of the hour; and in a passage absolutely decisive he says: 'usque in horam secundam plenam lectioni vacent: hora secunda agatur tertia' (c. XLVIII, 24); i.e. they are to read until the completion of the second hour, and then, 'at two,' the office of tierce is to be said, 'two'

being two natural hours after sunrise, about 7 o'clock at mid summer, when the sun rises at 4.30, and the natural day-hour are of 75 minutes. This passage shows beyond all possibility of controversy that, with St Benedict, when a single point o time is intended by the terms 'the second hour,' 'the eighth hour,'—'at two,' 'at eight,'—the end of the natural hour i signified.[1]

From what has been said it is clear that when St Benedic ordained that during the winter-half the monks were to ris at the eighth hour of the night, he meant the close of th eighth Roman night-hour. Of course, even if they had wate clocks, it must have been very difficult to keep watch over th night hours, and no doubt the time was kept only in a roug and ready way; nor is it to be supposed that sunset and sur rise were accurately observed every day, and the length of th night and day hours calculated with astronomical exactitud Still St Benedict's idea was, and no doubt the practice roughl concorded with it, that during the winter-half of the year the rose at an hour corresponding to about 2 a.m. of our time o November 1, and becoming gradually later, till at Christma it was our 2.30; then till March 25 it gradually worked bac to 2, and, should there be a late Easter, towards the end April it became as early as 10 (or perhaps 15) minutes befo 2, but not earlier. Thus it may be said in general that durin the winter the hour for rising varied from about 2 to 2.30.

It will be best to follow out the entire day during th winter season.

On rising they went to the church or oratory for the vigi or night office. How long this lasted is difficult to estimat there are so many unknown quantities.[2] On ordinary day the ferias, there were 14 psalms and 3 lessons, with a respo sory after each. The psalms were chanted or modulate and the responsories sung;[3] but it is probable that the ton

[1] In this St Benedict is in conformity with the most common Roman pr tice: 'An exhaustive study of passages in Latin literature has shown that t Romans, in the great majority of instances, referred to the completed hou (Cambridge, *Companion to Latin Studies*, p. 201).

[2] The question of the office in St Benedict's day is obscure; Abbot Delatt commentary on cc. VIII-XIX will be found helpful, giving references to the b and latest authorities.

[3] There is no distinction of meaning with St Benedict between dicere, cane cantare, modulare, psallere; there is no doubt that the entire office was modula with notes.

of the psalms were very simple. The idea sometimes put forward, that the antiphons were repeated after each verse, or couple of verses, of the psalms right through the office, as is done at the invitatory psalm at the beginning of the night office, seems hardly credible: we cannot imagine 'alleluias' after every verse of the six psalms of the 2nd nocturn daily, and right through every office during paschal time. How long the lessons may have been in St Benedict's day we have no means of determining; at a later date they were of great length, but that probably was part of the tendency to prolong the office, of which we shall speak in chapter XVIII. That they were of appreciable length is seen from the prescription that they are to be shortened in case the community was called late. Moreover, even the ferial night offices differ in length. On the whole, probably 1½ hours would be a reasonable average time to allow for the night office in winter. This means that at the beginning of November it would be over about 3.30, and at Christmas about 4.

The matin office, our lauds, always commenced at the 'aurora' or dawn, 'incipiente luce' (c. VIII). On November 1 this is at 5 in Rome, and at Christmas at 5.45. Thus there was between vigils and matins (lauds) an interval of 1½ to 1¾ hours in winter; during March and April it would diminish, and if Easter were late it would all but vanish. But whatever the period, it was to be devoted to learning the psalms and lessons and to 'meditation' (c. VIII), which with St Benedict is a general term for reading and prayer and the exercises of the spiritual life: in c. LVIII it covers the whole religious side of the novices' life. It is hardly necessary to say that 'meditatio' did not mean the discoursive prayer now understood by the name.

The matin office (lauds) varies considerably in length, and its chanting would take from half to three-quarters of an hour. The time from that till the end of the second hour was devoted to reading.[1] This period of reading would be from about 5.45 to 8.15 at November 1, from 6 to 9 at Christmas, prime being said at sunrise, 6.30 and 7.30 at the above dates. Deducting 20 minutes for prime, about 2½ hours throughout the winter was assigned to the morning reading. At the end of the second

[1] This paragraph is based on c. XLVIII.

hour, varying from 8.15 to 9, tierce was said, and then they worked till the end of the ninth hour, 2.30 p.m. at November 1, 2.45 at Christmas. This gave 5¾ hours at November 1 and 5¼ at Christmas; but 15 minutes should be deducted for sext at mid-day, and so 5½ hours would be the average spell of work in the winter. The short office of none was followed by the only meal of the day, at about 2.30; and then they gave themselves up to reading again until vespers, which were chanted about half an hour before sunset, and so at 4.15 on November 1 and at 4 at Christmas. Thus the reading on winter evenings was for rather more than an hour, making a daily total of about 3¾ hours throughout the winter.

Vespers finished at sunset,[1] and after a short interval they reassembled for the public reading of Cassian's Collations or other such book, and when four or five pages had been read, as much as the daylight allowed, i.e. for about 15 minutes, complin was said in the dusk, and they retired to bed before artificial light was needed. On this point St Benedict is explicit beyond possibility of doubt: 'Let all things be finished while it is still daylight' (c. XLI *fin.*). This means that he sent his monks to bed very early, about half an hour after sunset, 5.15 on November 1 and 5 at Christmas.[2] As they rose at 2 and 2.30 a.m. respectively on these dates, it seems that St Benedict gave his monks throughout the winter from 8¾ to as much as 9½ hours' sleep.

To sum up these results. On a typical day in the winter-half, the time may be roughly apportioned thus: office in church 4 hours;[3] 'meditatio' after vigils 1½; reading 3¾; work 5½; sleep 9; meal ½ = 24 hours. The figures were always gradually varying, but this gives a fair idea.

During Lent the horarium was different. Ash Wednesday may be as early as February 4, and Easter as late as April 25, and the horarium would differ greatly at these extreme dates. It will suffice to take as an average Lenten day a date half-way between them, at the middle of March. At this time

[1] This paragraph is based on cc. XLI, XLII.

[2] In southern latitudes the time of dusk is very short. At Rome on Christmas Day sunset is at 4.30 (real time); it is possible to read indoors till 4.45; for another half or three-quarter hour it is reasonably possible to go to bed without artificial light.

[3] Thus: vigils 1½ hours; lauds 40 minutes; prime and three little hours 50 minutes; vespers ½ hour; collation and complin ½ hour = 4 hours.

sunrise and sunset are so near 6 o'clock that we may
equinoctial hours of 60 minutes for both day and nig
horarium works out thus :

| A.M. | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Rise |
| 2—3.30 | Vigils |
| 3.30—4.30 | 'Meditatio' |
| 4.30 | Aurora |
| 4.30—5 | Matin Office (Lauds) |
| 5—9 | Reading (Prime at 6, sunrise) |
| 9 | Tierce |
| A.M.—P.M. | |
| 9.15—4 | Work (Sext at 12) |
| P.M. | |
| 4 | None |
| 4.30 | Vespers |
| 5 | Meal |
| 5.45 | Collation |
| 6 (sunset) | Complin |
| 6.30 | Retire |

According to this horarium reading was for about 3¾ hours, work 6½, 'meditatio' 1, sleep 7½.

Even at a late Easter the hour for rising was not earlier than 10 or 15 minutes before 2 a.m.; but the aurora became nearly an hour earlier; so that the period of 'meditatio' diminished almost to a vanishing-point at a late Easter. The period of sleep also tended to diminish throughout Lent, being reduced to perhaps 7 hours at a late Easter. But the reading and the work increased, the latter at the end of a late Lent to as much as 8 hours.

In the summer-half, from Easter till November 1, the plan of the horarium was entirely different. The regulation determining the hour of rising was that it should be such that the vigils might end a few minutes before the aurora, or dawn, when lauds were always to begin (c. VIII). But 'on account of the shortness of the nights' (c. X) there were no lessons or responsories at the night office, which consequently consisted solely of the chanting of 14 psalms. Probably about an hour would suffice. Consequently, if Easter should be early, as

March 25, when the aurora is at 4.15, the vigils began about and were followed almost immediately by lauds, which wou be over a few minutes before 5. Prime was said at sunrise, St Benedict makes no provision for this hour; probably it w given up to 'meditatio.' At about 6.20 they went forth their work till near 10. Tierce no doubt was then said; a from 10 till after 11.30 they read;[1] then sext was said, follow by dinner, which was over shortly after mid-day. Th followed the recognised Italian summer siesta till the midc of the eighth hour, i.e. 1.30, when none was said, and th again they worked until vespers at 5. Supper was at 5.30, th the reading of the Collations, and complin and to bed at 6.3 half an hour after sunset, while the daylight was still ju sufficient. This horarium would hold pretty well until t middle of April, giving for reading about 3 hours, for wc about 7, and sleep over 8. The mid-day siesta was additiona but St Benedict anticipates that this time may be spent reading, and no doubt in the early and later parts of t summer season, when the night rest was ample, this was s in this way an additional hour or more would be given reading.

We must now consider the summer solstice, about June : The aurora was at 2.15; consequently the vigils must ha begun at 1, so as to allow lauds, after a brief interval, to beg at 2.15. Lauds would end before 3, and sunrise and pri were at 4.30, leaving an interval of 1½ hours unassigned, p sumably devoted to 'meditatio.' By 5 they had gone out their work, till 9.15, when tierce was said. From 9.30 11.30 they read, and then said sext and dined. From shor after 12 till 2 was the siesta, no doubt taken by all. Nc was said at the middle of the eighth hour, at 2, and then wc till vespers. Vespers would have been about 6.30, supper 7, collation and complin at 7.30, and to bed at 8, sunset bei at 7.30 and darkness at 8.30.

The apportioning of times at midsummer, consequent was: office 3½ hours; reading 2, and probably 'meditatio' work 9; sleep 5 by night and 2 at siesta; meals 1 = 24.

From midsummer till the end of September the horari would gradually revert to the same as on March 25. T

[1] 'Usque hora quasi sexta agente' (c. XLVIII, 9; see my ed. p. 138).

average summer days, towards the middle of May and middle of August, would work out like this: office 3½ hours; reading and 'meditatio' 3¼; work 8; sleep 6¾ by night and 1½ at siesta; meals 1 = 24.

From September 14 till November the arrangement was special: the rising for the night office was regulated on the summer principle, but the remainder of the day was on the winter scheme, with the single meal about the ninth hour.[1] It is not necessary to plan out the horarium.

On Sundays the disposition of hours and duties was quite different (c. XI). The night office was considerably longer, there being in addition to the 14 psalms, 3 canticles, 12 lessons with responsories, Te Deum and Gospel: to allow for the chanting of all this, 2 or even 2½ hours would not be excessive. It is prescribed, therefore, that they are to rise earlier on Sundays. Indeed, at the height of the summer, when the aurora was at 2.15, they must, on Sundays, have risen at midnight, so as to be able to begin lauds at dawn, which was a fixed principle (c. VIII). On Sundays and solemnities mass was celebrated and they received holy communion (cc. XXXV, XXXVIII). Whatever time was over from religious duties was to be devoted to reading and 'meditatio;' this must have amounted to a good many hours.

In the foregoing reconstruction of the daily life certain things call for special notice:

(1) Some commentators declare it incredible that there was not a conventual mass daily. So it may seem to our ideas, which have filtered through the Middle Ages. But in reality, what would be incredible is that in all the minute directions as to the disposition of hours there should be no indication of this mass, were it celebrated, except for Sundays and solemnities. It is impossible to suppose that so important a daily duty should be thus passed by without mention. This is a case where the argument from silence is valid and imperative.

[1] There is an apparent contradiction. In c. XLVIII it is laid down that this winter arrangement should come into force on 'the Calends of October,' i.e. the 1st of October; but in c. XLI it is laid down that the single meal at the ninth hour begins from the Ides of September, i.e. the 13th, and all monastic tradition bears witness to the fact that the period of the fast began on Holy Cross Day, September 14.

Abbot Delatte and Dom Morin agree that there was no dail mass or daily communion in St Benedict's monastery.

(2) The commentators have struggled against the ver long time allotted to sleep. If we except the Sundays at mi summer, even on the shortest summer nights there were hours for sleep, supplemented by the 2 hours siesta, 7 hours i all. But earlier and later in the summer this time was longe and at the equinoxes it was 8½ hours of night repose; an during the winter-half of the year the time for sleep averag about 9 hours. Such long hours of sleep have appeared i credible; yet the data on which they are based seem certai beyond cavil. The instructions in cc. XLI, XLII make it cle that complin was at all times to be recited in the dusk, so th they could go to bed while there was still sufficient daylig without need of artificial light; that is about half an hour aft sunset, the twilight being of short duration in southern clime It must be remembered that during the Middle Ages, and i deed until comparatively recent times, agricultural laboure used habitually to go to bed by daylight; so that in this Benedict's practice was only that of the Italian peasantry fro whom his community was in great measure recruited. He again Abbot Delatte and Dom Morin are in substantive agre ment with my conclusions. Paul Warnefrid decides t matter by saying that complin must be by daylight, othe wise we could not say: 'Seven times in the day have I sur praise to Thee' (c. XLII).

(3) It follows that what is called 'midnight office'—t vigils said about midnight, between two broken periods sleep—which at a later time became very much the fashi among religious orders and even among Benedictines, was n part of St Benedict's conception of the monastic life. It quite clear his monks did not go to bed again, or repose recognised rule, after the night office. There was, indeed, need or justification for it; for early though they rose for t office, they had already had a sufficient, and usually a ve long, period of unbroken sleep.

(4) In the foregoing reconstructions no count has be taken of the story told by St Gregory, and already referred in chapter VI, which points to the fact that following t office, at least once in the day, was a fixed period of son

length during which the monks bent down to the pursuit of private prayer, 'studium orationis.' It seems very possible that this may have been during the time between lauds and prime, left unfilled by St Benedict.

(5) In the summer they had two periods of work, one in the early morning and one in the afternoon, from about 2 until 5 or 6. But to work in the fields in the heat of the day, under the Italian midsummer sun, would be well-nigh intolerable. The industrious Italian peasants do not do so: in the summer they begin their work in the fields at the earliest beginnings of the dawn,[1] and break off soon after 10 until 4 or 5, when the great heat of the day is passed; and then they work again for as long as there is any light. During the heat of the day they sleep for some hours, and this is their principal sleep in summer. That St Benedict should have imposed field work on his monks under such conditions would be unlike anything else in his Rule. And this, I think, affords the explanation of a sentence in the Rule that has perplexed the commentators. After saying that in summer from about 2 p.m. till vespers about 6, the monks are to work at what has to be done, he goes on: But if the need or the poverty of the monastery makes it necessary that they gather in the crops themselves, they are not to be saddened (c. XLVIII). It is clear that St Benedict looked on this as something abnormal; and the same appears from c. XLI, where it is laid down that after Pentecost on Wednesdays and Fridays there is to be the single meal at about 2.30 p.m., unless they have work in the fields. Here the legislation is on the basis that in the summer there will not be field work, and provision is made for the case of their having it as for an exception. That at other seasons St Benedict's monks were habitually employed in field work is clear from the Rule and from many places in Bk. II of the Dialogues. But the monks could not, without deranging their whole horarium and tenor of life, do the harvesting at the hours usual for agricultural work in the summer in southern Italy; if they did it, it had to be in the heat of the day. And so St Benedict intended that, if the monastery could afford it, the harvest should be gathered in by the hired labour

[1] Once when travelling to Rome by night in July, I saw them beginning to work while it was still almost dark.

of workmen able to work at the hours usual in Italy. For the monks, there was work to be done indoors on the summer afternoons, or in sheds and workshops, or in the shade. And it is altogether likely that in St Benedict's time the copying out of books was already a source of income for the monastery, even as is related of one of the Egyptian hermits, that he earned his maintenance by copying books;[1] and it has already been mentioned that transcription of books was the principal occupation of St Martin's monks of Marmoutier (p. 18).

(6) The question may be asked: Is it to be supposed that St Benedict's monks, most of them, were able to spend three or four hours a day reading? The answer is that St Benedict clearly supposed it, and he looked on it as negligence and sloth for any not to be able to spend a much longer time on Sundays at reading and 'meditatio' (si quis ita negligens et desidiosus fuerit ut non velit aut non possit meditare aut legere, c. XLVIII). He does contemplate the case of one unable to write (c. LVIII, 46), but he expected all to read. In the case of those who came to the monastery as boys or as young men there is no difficulty. And even the simplest folk can read the Bible with profit and joy. We must divest ourselves of the imagination that the fact of the Bible and the writings of the Fathers being in Latin was an impediment to St Benedict's monks, for Latin was their vernacular language.

We are now in a position to sum up the results of what has been said in this chapter, and to form to ourselves a general picture of the daily life in St Benedict's monastery.

The hour for rising was nearly always about 2 a.m.; only for two or three brief periods of the year was it more than a quarter of an hour earlier or later: so that if a mean time has to be named, there is no doubt it should be 2 a.m. As has been shown, the monks had had an ample period of sleep. They repaired to the oratory for the vigils, which probably lasted about an hour in summer, an hour and a half in winter, and were followed (in winter after an interval, usually over an hour, of 'meditatio') by lauds, sung at dawn. These were the two most considerable of the canonical offices, so that

[1] Palladius, *Lausiac History*, c. XXXVIII, 'Evagrius.'

the day began with the praise of God and the paying to Him the duty of our service, 'nostrae servitutis officia' (c. XVI). Then began the other works and occupations of the day, interrupted four times by the celebration of the four day hours of the canonical office; this frequent return to the oratory keeping the monks ever in mind of what was the work to which they were above all devoted. The other works consisted of reading and manual labour in the fields, the garden, the workshops, or about the house, kitchen bakehouse and mill being mentioned by name. The dinner was at mid-day in summer, at about 2.30 in winter; it consisted of two cooked dishes of vegetables and probably eggs, perhaps fish, with salad, bread and wine, but not meat. Work and reading was again the order of the day till vespers, followed in the summer by supper. At sunset they assembled for the reading of the Collations, and having said complin they retired to rest before the night set in. They slept in common dormitories, without cells or partitions, which did not come into use till the late Middle Ages. The entire life was common life, in the open, without any kind of privacy.

If we combine the various tables of time, so as to arrive at an average or typical day as planned out by St Benedict, we get the following as a rough notion of the distribution of time on a normal Benedictine day in summer:

| | |
|---|---|
| Opus Dei | 3½ |
| ('Studium orationis' | ½) |
| Reading | 4 |
| Work | 6½ |
| Sleep | 8½ |
| Meals | 1 |
| | 24 |

This would be for the summer; in winter there was but one meal, work and reading were somewhat less, the office was longer and so was the sleep, and there was the period of 'meditatio' after night office.

It will be noticed that there was no provision for recreation at any time, and there can be no doubt that silence reigned almost undisturbed. Still, what is suggested by the Rule is

not the technical 'perpetual silence' of a later age, when sig were devised for all the ordinary objects that might be require so as to obviate the need for any speaking. The employme of signs St Benedict confined to the refectory, that the publ reading might not be interrupted. The general tenor of tl Rule suggests not what Abbot Delatte repudiates under tl name 'mutism,' but rather that the monks spoke when reaso able necessity arose in the conduct of the affairs and life of tl monastery. But it is clear that St Benedict, like other mo astic legislators, attached great importance to silence, and tl public silence of the monastery in all probability was hard broken.

This is the natural place to bring together the evidence to what seems to be implied by the Rule in the matter silence and talking. During the night complete silence reigne technically called 'summum silentium' (cc. XXXVIII, LII); a so after complin there was no permission for any one to spe at all, unless the necessities of guests required it (c. XLII). T strict night silence ended with the calling up for the nig office; for St Benedict says that while getting up the mon are 'to encourage one another gently, on account of the e cuses of the sleepy-heads' (c. XXII). This welcome glimp almost the only one, of the daily life of the community actually lived, disposes of any theory of 'perpetual silenc and shows that St Benedict's monks spoke, and were intend to speak, to one another quietly when there was reasona cause; and also that the speaking was not confined to occasic of necessity or even of business. Another passage bears t out: after prescribing that during the hours allotted to readi seniors are to go round to see that none spend the time gossiping, the injunction is added; 'and let not brother cons with brother at unsuitable hours' (c. XLVIII). Here 'ho incompetentes' implies that there were 'horae competent suitable times, for the monks to consort together and t within the provisions of the Rule, and the very term 'ho competentes' is used in c. XXXI of the regular times when monks should go to the cellarer to ask for and receive wl they needed. In c. VI there is in the current texts of the R the caution that, when a permission is being asked from superior, 'no more be said than is expedient'; but it is

gloss, added no doubt by some one who thought St Benedict's words needed strengthening (see chapter XI, p. 176).

A further indication that the amount of speaking in the ordinary life of the monastery was appreciable, is afforded by the suggestion that one of the things wherein voluntary mortification, beyond the requirements of the Rule, may be practised during Lent, is 'loquacity': 'let each one offer to God above the measure that is obligatory, something voluntary, as abstinence in food, in drink, in sleep, in loquacity' (c. XLIX). This would have been impossible had 'perpetual silence' been the rule, or had legitimate speaking been confined to the limits of strict necessity. The very fact that St Benedict takes for granted some of the monks will be loquacious, and that unnecessary talking will be a matter wherein self-restraint can be exercised, proves that in matter of silence, like in every other branch of asceticism, what he aimed at was not total abstinence, but temperance or sparingness (parcitas, cc. XXXIX, XL).

St Benedict's term in treating of the virtue of silence is 'taciturnitas' rather than 'silentium'; it is the title of c. VI, which lays down the principles regulating the subject. 'Silentium' occurs only four times in the Rule, thrice of absolute silence—in the refectory, on going out of the oratory, and during the summer siesta; the fourth occasion is when it is said that monks ought at all times to tend to silence, 'studere silentio' (c. XLII). There is a difference between 'silentium' and 'taciturnitas.' The first is a fact, and its opposite is talking; the second is a habit, and its opposite is talkativeness or loquacity. It is the habit that St Benedict aims at securing, and the things he forbids are the various excesses of the tongue. This appears from his precepts on the subject. It is loquacity that is to be mortified, and not merely speaking (c. XLIX). In c. VI the permission for speaking even good words is to be given rarely; but it is scurrility and idle words or those provoking laughter that are wholly forbidden. Among the 'Instruments of Good Works' (c. IV) we find 'not to love much talking'; 'not to speak vain words or those that provoke laughter.' In the 'Degrees of Humility' (c. VII) the ninth is 'to restrain one's tongue and observe taciturnity until spoken to'; and the eleventh: 'when a monk speaks let him speak gently and without laughter, humbly and gravely, in

words few and reasonable, and let him not be loud voiced.' This is but laying down the universal rules of good manners in conversation, applicable not only to monks but to every one; it reminds us of the similar principles of politeness laid down by St Basil for the monk whom, as Newman remarks, 'he would make to be the true gentleman.' Among his instructions on the monastic life we find: 'This, too, is a very principal point to attend to, knowledge how to converse; to interrogate without over-earnestness; to answer without desire of display; not to interrupt a profitable speaker, nor to desire ambitiously to put in a word of one's own; to be measured in speaking and hearing; not to be ashamed of receiving, or to be grudging in giving information, nor to disown what one has learned from others. The middle tone of voice is best, neither so low as to be inaudible, nor ill-bred from its high pitch. One should reflect first what one is going to say, and then give it utterance; be courteous when addressed, amiable in social intercourse; not aiming to be pleasant by smartness, but cultivating gentleness in kind admonitions. Harshness is ever to be put aside, even in censuring.'[1] This shows that St Basil did not contemplate a reign of 'perpetual silence' in his monasteries.

A recognised fixed daily period of recreative conversation was introduced into Benedictine monasteries at an early date: Dom Morin says it was universal as early as the ninth century.[2] Paul Warnefrid's commentary, however, gives no indication of such a custom at the end of the eighth century. He speaks of a public room with a fire in the winter, where the monks could come to warm themselves, but says they should not speak there (c. VI). The general impression he makes is the one advocated above, that the monks might speak when there was reasonable cause; he insists that 'summum silentium' and 'omne silentium' mean complete silence, but 'silentium' means 'in a subdued voice' (suppressa voce, cc. XXXVIII, XLII).

[1] Ep. 2, Newman's translation, *Church of the Fathers*, 'Basil and Gregory,' § 5.

[2] *Revue Bénédictine*, 1889, p. 352.

# CHAPTER XVIII

## THE BENEDICTINE IDEA IN THE CENTURIES

HAVING now before our eyes a picture of the life and work established by St Benedict at Monte Cassino, we must trace and appraise the vicissitudes of the Benedictine Idea during the fourteen centuries since St Benedict's day.

It must in the first place be recognised clearly that in no Benedictine monastery—Black, White, or Blue[1]— at the present day, or for several centuries, indeed for more than a thousand years, have the conditions of life borne any close resemblance externally to those of St Benedict's Monte Cassino. When, indeed, I have been staying at the great Rhineland abbey of the Beuronese Congregation at Maria Laach near Andernach, and have watched the lay brothers there, a hundred of them, pious simple men, working the large farm of the monastery, engaged in agricultural labour, and, like St Pachomius' monks, plying all the trades, as carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, gardeners, and the rest, so that the monastery is almost self-contained and self-supporting, I have said to myself, Here we would have an exact reproduction of St Benedict's monastery, if only, instead of the Rosary, they had a vernacular office of psalms and lections in choir—and if there were no choir monks, only one or two priests to say mass.

And so, when we take the extremes: on the one hand, St Benedict's community of lay men, mostly simple folk, living in great simplicity of life, given up to the cultivation of personal religion, spending most of the day at manual work in the

[1] Blue Benedictines are the small separate order of Silvestrines; White are principally the Cistercians, also the small orders of the Cenobitic branch of the Camaldolese and the Olivetans, and single monasteries, as Monte Vergine and Caldey; Black are the fourteen congregations of mere Benedictines spoken of in chapter XV, and the small order of Vallombrosians.

fields, among whom anything that could be called intellectua life as such was hardly existent; and on the other hand, th normal Benedictine community of to-day, composed of priest living together a dignified common life on a high level, i commodious and usually stately surroundings, amid the ele mentary amenities of life, educated and cultured men, expecte to have, and often having, qualifications of learning and schola ship, maintaining, indeed even with much circumstance, th religious exercises of the Rule, but devoted to intellectu pursuits, to study, to education, to the works of the ministry when, I say, we take these extremes, it is evident that we ar in face of a problem, a question so germane to the purpose c this book, that it calls aloud for an answer.

The change is immense; and the question is this: Ha Benedictine life become something else, or is it a living growt that has obeyed the laws of a genuine development? would S Benedict's perplexity, did he find himself in a modern Ben dictine abbey, be different in kind from St Peter's, did th apostle find himself present at a papal function in the chur which bears his name? The question thus raised is manifol and the matter will have to be considered from divers side It will be helpful to have before our minds Cardinal Newman formulation of the tests whereby developments may be di tinguished from corruptions: 'I venture to set down seve notes of varying cogency, independence, and applicability, discriminate healthy developments of an idea from its sta of corruption and decay, as follows: There is no corrupti if it retains one and the same type, the same principles, th same organisation; if its beginnings anticipate its subseque phases, and its later phenomena protect and subserve earlier; if it has a power of assimilation and revival, and vigorous action from first to last.'[1]

To come now to the Benedictines. The first great chan in Benedictine life, and as a consequence, in Benedictine ide was wrought by the sacking and destruction of Monte Cassi by the Lombards in 581 or 589, and the migration of t community to Rome, where it was established in a monaste

[1] *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 'Genuine Developments.'

by the Lateran basilica, as St Gregory tells us (Dialogues, ii, Pref.). The mere change from country to town must needs have affected profoundly the life of the community, by rendering impossible the long hours of agricultural work that had been so great an element in St Benedict's intention for the life of his monks, and throwing them more on indoor and sedentary work instead. Nothing, it may be said, is known of the Benedictine Lateran monastery. But in St Gregory's monastery of St. Andrew on the Coelian Hill the Benedictine Rule was followed and the life was organised in conformity with its prescriptions and spirit, if not from its foundation, at any rate from a time shortly after the coming of the Monte Cassino monks to Rome.[1] Thus in this we have the second Benedictine monastery known to history, for of Subiaco and the Terracina foundation there are no records from this period. Some details as to the manner of life may be gleaned from St Gregory's Letters and Dialogues; but what interests us now is that a number of the monks were in holy orders, or capable of taking them: witness Augustine and the rest who came to England, and other monks of his monastery whom Gregory raised to the episcopate.[2]

This matter of the ordination of Benedictine monks is of primary importance for our present purpose, being the thing on which more than on aught else depended the changes that came over Benedictine life. More than once I questioned Edmund Bishop as to when it became the regular thing for Benedictines to be priests, and he always answered that he did not know, but it was very early. I can here adduce only the few pieces of evidence known to me—evidence of course not merely of individuals being priests, for this is assumed in the Rule (c. LXII)—which so far as they go bear out Edmund Bishop's impression. The commentary of Paul Warnefrid in many places makes it clear that in his monastery, *cir.* 775, there were a number of priests, and indeed it looks as if all, or certainly most, proceeded to ordination. A century later, 895, at St Gall's, out of 101 monks, 42 were priests, 24

[1] See Dudden, cited above, p. 82.

[2] One to be archbishop of Ravenna, others bishops of Syracuse and Velletri.

deacons, 15 subdeacons, and 20 unordained; and 'it appea
that in general all the monks in slow sequence became sul
deacons, deacons, and finally priests.'[1] It is altogether u
likely that St Gall's differed notably from the general ru
of Benedictine abbeys, and it may safely be said that durir
the course of the tenth century, and by the year 1000, it b
came the established rule that the monks should be ordaine
A century after this date Rupert of Deutz (*d.* 1135) definite
bears witness that it was so then.[2]

This change from the lay to the clerical state was the mo
vital of all changes that have taken place in Benedictine li
and led to the most far-reaching results. In the first place,
led to the final abandonment of manual labour as the pri
cipal occupation of monks. It also led to a greater frequen
in the celebration of mass, which in St Benedict's monaste
as we have seen, was only on Sundays and principal solem
ties; so that soon the daily conventual mass (of course a hi
mass, for there was no other) became one of the recognis
community exercises. The conventual mass was already p
of the daily routine of the monastery where Paul Warnef
wrote his commentary in the third quarter of the eighth ce
tury. The mass still was celebrated at the strict liturgi
hours; after tierce (about 9 a.m.) in summer, an hour befc
the single meal throughout the winter, and so at 1 p.m., and
Lent late in the afternoon, an hour before vespers (c. XXX
Moreover, occasionally, as when a saint's solemnity fell
a Sunday, there were two masses, one after prime and c
after tierce (c. XI). There is mention, too, of an office of
dead (officia mortuorum) being celebrated in the oratory
LII), but there is no ground for supposing it was said oth
wise than when a death had occurred in the communi
Thus in Paul Warnefrid's commentary there is no suggest
of any additions to the original canonical office, as St Benec
had left it, other than the daily conventual mass.

In this commentary, too, can be discerned another natu
consequence of the majority of the monks being in h

[1] Schulte, *Neues Archiv*, 1909, p. 763.
[2] *Altercatio monachi et clerici*, Migne, P.L. clxx, 537.

orders, the presence of servants in the garden and the kitchen (c. XXXI); but the passage cited above (p. 101) shows that manual labour was still a recognised part of the life for all. Thus before the end of the eighth century Benedictinism had travelled a long way on the road from St Benedict to its later-day presentations.

At this point we meet St Benedict of Aniane, the man who next to St Benedict himself most profoundly influenced the course of Benedictine life and practice. His influence we shall meet more than once in the sequel; but the matter that must engage our attention now is the additions and accretions to the canonical office that set in with him, and held their ground until almost modern times, modifying the character of Benedictine life during a period of eight centuries and more. This subject has been treated with his usual sweep of knowledge and command of detail by Edmund Bishop in one of the essays reproduced in *Liturgica Historica*, 'The Prymer,' from which what immediately follows is derived.

Benedict of Aniane certainly introduced the practice of reciting the fifteen gradual psalms before the vigils or night office, and probably also that of saying the office of the dead each day. These practices once established in the monasteries of the Carolingian Empire, soon became general in Benedictine circles everywhere, and the tendency was rapidly carried further and further under the influence of Cluny from the middle of the tenth century. Mr Bishop draws out a table exhibiting the accretions contained in 'Regularis Concordia,' which would seem to be St Ethelwold's work, inspired by the larger mind of St Dunstan, and imposed on all the English monasteries by the royal authority. Before vigils were the seven penitential psalms and the fifteen gradual psalms; and then, at various points during the day, the office of the dead, the penitential psalms again, the litany, and a series of commemorations and suffrages; also an office of All Saints consisting of lauds and vespers, and after each of the canonical hours two or three psalms for benefactors and familiars. In all these points the Cluny observance was the same. It has to be remembered, too, that the canonical office was chanted throughout; that besides the conventual mass

there was another sung mass daily after prime, called the matutinal mass, later the Lady mass, being 'de B.V.M.'; and that the lessons at the night office were of prodigious length: at Cluny itself Genesis was read through at vigils in a week, and the Epistle to the Romans in two nights. Bishop sums up by saying that at the close of the tenth century all this obtained universally throughout the monasteries of England, France, Germany, and Italy.

In chapter XVII, about four hours daily was estimated as a probable average time for the total common service of God in choir according to St Benedict's horarium, and certainly it was not much more. But in medieval monasteries it must have taken up many more hours than this: indeed much the greater portion of the waking hours must have been passed in church, as is now done by the monks of the Greek Church. It can hardly be supposed that nothing but piety prompted the change. The cause probably was this: manual work had been given up; relatively few men, even Benedictine monks, are students such as will spend several hours a day in reading, and in the early Middle Ages the difficulties as to books and libraries must have been nearly prohibitive; consequently, as some way had to be found of filling up the time, the monks were kept in the church nearly all day to give them something to do and keep them occupied.

As has been said, the spread of the accretions to the canonical office no less than their magnitude was due to the influence of Cluny and the great vogue its observances and spirit had in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In another respect also Cluny influence made itself felt, viz. in what may be called a ritualistic movement.[1] The old Benedictine offices and services doubtless were characterised by the same simplicity as marked the rites of the Roman Church at the time.[2] At Cluny full scope was given to the tendency towards great elaboration of ceremonial and splendour of ritual, and pomp and richness in the externals of divine service, progressive

[1] This point I owe to one of Edmund Bishop's 'letters' (a treatise indeed) on the Cluniac and Cistercian movements, which, it may be hoped, will hereafter be printed.

[2] Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, 'Genius of the Roman Rite.'

stages of all which are to be observed in successive Cluny customaries of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries. There can be no doubt, too, that the ceremonialising of the daily social life of the monasteries was of Cluny inspiration.

After these tendencies had run their course throughout all Black monkdom for about two hundred years, in the twelfth century signs of a reaction manifested themselves, and a common feature of reforms was the cutting away from the office these devotional excrescences. The principal Benedictine reform, the Cistercian, restored manual labour, at least at first and for a time, and swept away all accretions except the daily office of the dead: the daily conventual mass was retained, and the matutinal mass on Sundays, feasts B.V.M., and certain other principal feasts. In spite, however, of reforms the tide ran unabated throughout the whole course of the Middle Ages and the Renascence epoch, and overflowed from the monasteries and the monks to the cathedrals and the secular clergy. In Benedictine monasteries the gradual psalms and the additional mass maintained their footing universally, the office of the dead was common, and a new devotional office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, called the Little Office, but in reality a full office of all the hours, in great measure a duplication of the canonical office, came into general vogue. Bishop (*loc. cit.* p. 235) shows that at Salisbury on all ferias (and most days were ferias) the offices B.V.M. and of the dead were recited; and he thus summarises the whole case: 'A competent and well-informed liturgist of the second half of the fourteenth century was able to say that the daily recital of the offices of the Blessed Virgin and of the dead was now obligatory on all, by virtue of the general custom of all nations. By the laudable practice of many, other particular offices are also observed, as the penitential and gradual psalms, and so forth' (p. 234). It may be noted that the last vestiges of the accretions were removed only the other day, as part of the reform of the Breviary carried through by Pius X.

In connexion with the office one point more must be mentioned as affecting the character of Benedictine life. St Benedict, we have seen, placed the night office at about two a.m., and after it the monks did not go to bed again, having already

had full time for sleep. But the 'midnight office,' with broke sleep in periods before and after, introduced by the Carthusiar and other orders, such as the Dominicans, from the eleven to the thirteenth century, became so much the fashion an the correct thing, that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuri it was adopted all but universally by Benedictines, and r mained for centuries one of the marks of good, and especial of reformed, observance.[1] Hence appears the absurdity of remark sometimes made, that the monks were 'country gentl men,' much like the neighbouring landlords: not even in tl 'Ages of Faith' did country gentlemen commonly get up midnight to say their prayers, and spend several hours a d in church.

During the later Middle Ages, though the tenor of th public life went on as hitherto with the prolonged offices choir, a change began to come over the private life of t monks. They were submitted to the action of the new wav and currents that passed over the face of the earth—schol ticism, systematic study of theology and canon law, the u versity movement. And so Benedictines responded to t enlarged outlook and improved methods prevailing all arour The Bull 'Summi Magistri' (1336) required serious cour of ecclesiastical studies to be pursued by the young monks the monasteries, and imposed the law that for each twer monks of the community there should be one at a universi following the higher courses in Scripture, theology, or can law.[2] In the Renascence period abbots (certainly in Engla often were doctors in divinity or canon law. Thus by end of the period studies began to hold a more definite a better organised place in the life of the monasteries.

What is to be said of the medieval presentation of Be dictine life? Nothing else can be said than that it wa complete transformation of the manner of life planned by

[1] See Card. Gasquet's picture of the 'Daily Life' in an English Benedic monastery during the later Middle Ages (*English Monastic Life*, cc. vi, vii).

[2] Thus there were houses for Benedictine students at both Oxford and C bridge. I am not able to say how it was on the Continent so early; but at end of the sixteenth century there were Benedictine colleges at Salamanca Douai.

Benedict at Monte Cassino. It enables us to understand how arose the formula 'propter chorum fundati' as the definition of Benedictine monachism. Also, when we remember that the multiplication of offices still held sway in the seventeenth century, it explains and justifies such protests as those of Fr Baker: 'It is a great mistake to think that the spirit of St Benedict's order and rule consists in a public, orderly, protracted, solemn singing of the divine office'; and 'whosoever would attempt the restoring of the true spirit of religion, which is contemplation, will labour in vain if he think to compass his holy design by multiplying of ceremonies, enlarging of offices, increasing of external austerities, rigorous regulating of diet and abstinences.'[1]

I have said that medieval Benedictinism was a transformation of St Benedict's intention. It was more. It was a reversal of one of the things he deliberately did in his reconstruction of Western monachism. One of the 'licet legamus' passages, wherein he definitely sets aside practices and even cherished ideals of the earlier monachism, occurs at the end of c. XVIII: 'Though we read that our holy Fathers said the entire psalter each day, let us, tepid ones, at any rate say it each week.' The office he constituted consists on ordinary days of the equivalent of forty-three psalms and canticles. The accretions by themselves were quite double this, making in all a daily psalmody that in quantity was hardly, if at all, less than the daily psalter which St Benedict had rejected.

Here we are brought up against a phenomenon of much interest and importance for appraising the later developments and changes in Benedictine life. In chapter II, I wrote: 'There have been in the monastic movement from the beginning certain conflicting ideals, tendencies, currents; and the course of monastic history has been in large measure but the external manifestations of the interplay of these forces' (p. 11). Looked at from this standpoint, it will be found that the whole history of the religious life in the West, monastic and other, outside Benedictine circles, and in some degree within them too, has been in large measure a reaction against St Benedict,

[1] *Sancta Sophia*, pp. 152, 160.

a series of endeavours to restore the elements of the older monachism which he discarded after having made personal trial of them.

St Benedict, in conformity with Egyptian ideals still universally prevalent (see chapter II), started life as a hermit. The eremitical life is by its very nature individualistic; it is a life spent alone with God, the soul being thrown wholly on God and itself, so that the cultivation of the spiritual life must become intensely subjective and introspective—self-examination, self-discipline, the pursuit of personal perfection and of purely interior prayer—all these solitary exercises of the spirit must be the hermit's whole religion. And they will prompt him, in the process of his lonely self-discipline and growth in perfection, to undertake the practice of austerities of all sorts; fasts, vigils, prolonged prayer, exposure, nakedness, self-inflicted bodily penances—these were everywhere the accompaniments of the eremitical life, and we know from St Gregory's pages that in the Sacro Speco St Benedict practised them all. Moreover, such a life was the purely contemplative life of Cassian's hermits (above, p. 94), without outdoor work. Thus St Benedict's initiation in the monastic life embraced these four elements: the eremitical life, severe corporal austerity, individualistic or solitary spirituality, a purely contemplative life in the strictest sense.

And so at first sight the most striking feature in his reconstitution of the monastic life for Italian and Western conditions is that St Benedict deliberately turned his back on these four things that he had himself so whole-heartedly practised: he laid down that his Rule is for cenobites only, expressly excluding hermits; he eschewed the spirit of austerity as hitherto understood to be a constituent element of the monastic life; and it was to the discipline of family life and the performance of a round of community exercises, rather than to the personal strivings of an individualistic piety, that he looked for the religious formation of his monks.[1] This is symbolised in the objectivity of his description of the monastery as 'a school of the service of God,' not (in accordance with the

[1] These features have been brought out in chapters III, IV, XIII.

more subjective ideas of later spirituality) as 'a school of perfection'; it shows that the idea uppermost in his mind was God's service, rather than the self-betterment of the monks or their progress in virtue—if we may thus distinguish what are in reality but aspects of the same thing. For indeed they do imply different points of view, and the distinction serves to bring out the objective concrete character of St Benedict's conception of the life. In the matter of prayer the same thing comes out; though solitary mental prayer is provided for as an element of the life, all the emphasis is laid on the public social prayer of the canonical office; yet even this was kept down to what in those days must have seemed narrow limits.[1] Furthermore, in company with SS. Pachomius and Basil, he ruled out what we have seen was the idea of the Egyptian hermits as to the contemplative life, that it was one from which every outside work, even agriculture, had to be excluded (above, p. 94).

In yet another matter did St Benedict turn his back on his own first ideas. At Subiaco he formed what must be called an inchoate organised and centralised congregation or order; but at Monte Cassino he entirely abandoned any such scheme. This has been sufficiently dealt with in chapter XV.

And so we may schedule the elements of the older or pre-Benedictine monachism deliberately discarded by St Benedict:

the eremitical life;
bodily austerity;
individualistic or subjective spirituality;
purely contemplative life without definite work;
prolonged psalmody;
centralised organisation (as that of the Pachomian monasteries).

But all these ideas abandoned by St Benedict correspond to instincts that have their roots deep down in human nature. The idea of the eremitical life, the desire of breaking off intercourse with men and going into solitude, at any rate for a time, in order to give oneself up exclusively to religious exercises, is a tendency that manifests itself in all forms of religion. Similarly

[1] St Columbanus prescribed thirty-six psalms for the night office.

the practice of asceticisms and austerities, and the cultivation of subjective individualistic spirituality are everywhere spontaneous expressions of the religious sense. Again, quite outside the sphere of religion, in political, in social, in commercial affairs, organisation, centralisation, co-ordination, are commonly felt to be the surest way of achieving successful results.

For more than four centuries, from 650 till near 1100, St Benedict's ideas held almost universal sway in the religious world of western Europe. But at the end of the tenth century and during the eleventh a strong tendency set in to revert to the eremitical life, perhaps owing to the example of the Greek monks, who at this time entered Sicily and south Italy in great numbers. This tendency produced the orders of Camaldolese (*cir.* 975) in Italy, and in France the Grandmontines (1076) and Carthusians (1084), all leading practically eremitical lives, and coming together ordinarily only for the church services. The Vallombrosians (1038) near Florence maintained a cenobitical life, but eliminated every element of Benedictine life that was not devoted to pure contemplation. The eremitical and contemplative tendency manifested itself also in the early Carmelites (1245) and the groups of hermits gathered together (1256) into the order of Augustinian Hermits or Friars. All the new orders that came into being from the eleventh century onwards, the great mendicant orders and the various orders and congregations of modern times, all are organised bodies with centralised government of one kind or other: sometimes democratic and republican in spirit, sometimes bureaucratic and oligarchical, sometimes strongly monarchical: but always a complete reversal of St Benedict's plan or absence of plan, for the working of his institute. And these medieval and modern orders, be they offshoots from the Benedictine trunk, or medieval friars, or modern congregations of clerks regular, or what not, have all been characterised by the emphasis laid in varying degrees on the practices of corporal austerity in manner of life, and of self-inflicted bodily mortifications; and by a shifting of the centre of gravity of the spiritual life from the common prayer of the canonical office to the cultivation of private mental prayer. And all the subjectivity of modern spirituality, with its self-introspec

tion, its hankering after self-inflicted austerities, its analysis of motives, its methods of meditation, its marking progress in virtue, its conscious advancement in perfection, even its daily charts of defects and acts of virtue and mortification, and its preference of private over common prayer,—what is it all, but a reversion to the individualism of the earlier monachism of Egypt, from the objective concrete monastic life symbolised by St Benedict in calling his monastery a school, not of perfection, but of God's service.[1]

And so the whole course of the history of monasticism and of the religious life since the end of the Benedictine centuries has been a process of return to the elements of the primitive monachism of Egypt from which St Benedict broke away; it has been, in one way or another, a steady reaction from St Benedict's reconstruction of the religious life.

These tendencies operating all around, there has necessarily been a perennial struggle on the part of Benedictines to withstand them, to keep them from invading Benedictine territory and encroaching on Benedictine life. And not always has the struggle been successful. At different times and in different ways these reactions from St Benedict's ideas have made themselves felt among Benedictines, and especially at times when reform was in the air, as in the period of the Councils of Constance and Basle, when a manner of life and a theory of asceticism were widely introduced little in harmony with St Benedict's mind. It is not necessary to enumerate or trace the course of these reversals of Benedictine theory; many have been noted in preceding chapters, especially XV; others will be noted in those that follow, especially XXI. Here it will suffice to remark that at all times the problem for Black Monks has been to keep the right middle path between rigorism and laxity; between the tendency to austerity natural to religious zeal, and the tendency to relaxation natural to human nature.

[1] The tendencies enumerated in the text not only characterise spirituality and religious strivings in Catholic circles in modern times, but hold sway almost universally. They characterise modern pietism, be it evangelical, nonconformist, or high church: examples are to be found in the diaries of Hurrell Froude (*Remains*), Dr. Barnardo (*Memoirs*), and many others who might be cited.

At the same time it must not be supposed that Benedictines have had nothing to learn, or have learned nothing, since the close of the Benedictine centuries. They have at all times lived the life of the Church, and each successive phase of church life has left its permanent mark upon them. They have been able in great measure to absorb and assimilate much of the essence of all the great movements that have swept through the religious life of western Europe, without detriment to their own spirit and life ; elements congenial to them they have assumed, those after trial found unsuitable they have been able to expel.

What has been called above the ritualistic movement, initiated by St Benedict of Aniane and carried to its extreme by Cluny, has been reduced to due proportions and is no longer a menace to the well-balanced Benedictine life of the monasteries. But it has left behind it a great tradition, prized by all Benedictines and felt by them to be truly of the spirit of our Holy Father—a love of the beauty of God's House and of the magnificence of His worship, and a high and dignified level of the liturgical observance, as high as the circumstances of each abbey will allow, in the performance of St Benedict's 'Work of God.' This is the first love of Benedictines, and it is the heritage of what in itself was, in the excess to which it ran, a great reversal of St Benedict's idea. One feature of the additions to St Benedict's Work of God, the first of them in time, the daily conventual mass, has kept its place as part, and even principal part, of the liturgical service, prescribed by the rubrics and of obligation, though not on individuals, in all monasteries. A low mass satisfies the obligation ; but there is a general sense that where a community is strong enough and the conditions render it feasible, the congruous Benedictine thing is that it be a sung mass, as a constituent part of a full Benedictine community life.

Benedictines have kept pace with the growth of Eucharistic devotion since the Middle Ages ; thus Benedictine priests conform to the universal practice and say their private mass daily, and regard it as the principal and most fruitful exercise of their spiritual life. They have gone through the course of studies recognised and legislated for from age to age as the

preparation for the priesthood; at the present day it is a six years' course, two years of scholastic philosophy and four of theology, Scripture and other subjects being interwoven.

They recognise that the science of prayer and of the spiritual life has been perfected by the experiences and analyses of holy men since the Middle Ages, and while clinging to what they learn from St Benedict and Cassian and St Gregory, they are willing to learn also from St Teresa and St John of the Cross, Carmelites though they be, and living after the Benedictine centuries; perceiving that they only formulate more systematically what is found in Cassian and the ancients.

A word must be said on the question referred on p. 108 to this place for an answer: Why, since the fifteenth or sixteenth century, have set periods of daily mental prayer, for a half-hour or more, been established by rule in all religious orders, the various Benedictine congregations among them? Fr Baker's answer seems satisfactory: it is owing to the greater complexity of their life, and the greater distractiveness of the employments of monks and all religious nowadays, that these set periods of more concentrated prayer have become necessary: 'Since it cannot be denied that to persons far more distracted by studies than anciently they were by labours, which did not hinder a moderate quiet attention to God, vocal prayer has not ordinarily speaking sufficient force to recollect the mind habitually; hence it is that the use of appointed daily recollections hath seemed to be of absolute necessity, without which the spirit of contemplation would be quite lost; that sole exercise in a good measure making amends for all other defects in which we seem to come short of the ancients' (*Sancta Sophia*, p. 171).

The present age has been called the 'Age of Devotions.' Here again Benedictines will not hold aloof from the current life of the Church; but if they are wise they will take heed to Fr Baker's advices not to encumber themselves with a multiplicity of devotions or complicate their spiritual life with a number of voluntary vocal prayers: we have seen (p. 108) that he recommends none beyond the canonical office. However, in view of the strong encouragements given by so many Popes, especially in recent times, to the use of the Rosary,

probably most Benedictines aim at saying some portion of i daily. Others will practise the popular devotion of the Wa of the Cross. Elsewhere I wrote: 'The more that educate and intellectual Catholics in their practical religious life thro themselves into the great stream of living Catholicism, an partake with simplicity of heart, each one according to h individual spirit, bent, attraction, in the ordinary devotior and pious practices of the poor, the higher will they rise i the religion of the Spirit.'[1] This was an idea dear to Mabillo the typical Benedictine scholar; before the morning office l used to visit the Blessed Sacrament, the Lady Altar, and t Relics, and used to say that such pious practices are necessa to keep alive in the heart simplicity and fervour.

Among devotions may be reckoned the taking the discipli and the other such bodily austerities that play so large a pa in modern devotional life. Here Benedictines are in presen of practices greatly in vogue, indeed almost universal, in r ligious orders, but which certainly were no part of St Ber dict's idea, or of Benedictine life for many centuries. congregations that may lay claim to the title 'reformed' th has been, since the sixteenth century, a time appointed week or oftener, for taking the discipline by rule. In unreform congregations it is left to individual choice, the permission the abbot being obtained (Decl. 19 of English Congregatic cf. Rule, c. XLIX).

In all the things here enumerated—private prayer, de tions, austerities—Benedictines are free to follow their perso attractions, the only principle of choice being that which tl find suits their spirit best and brings them nearest to G As there is no Benedictine school of theology, Benedicti being free to adopt the tenets of any one of the appro theological schools, and no Benedictine style of architect or art, so there is no Benedictine mysticism other than t of the Church, no Benedictine method of prayer, no Be dictine system of the spiritual life, no Benedictine devot to which Benedictines as such are pledged: in short no Be dictine particularisms. This is part of what is meant 'Benedictine Liberty of Spirit.'

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, 1906, p. 502.

What may be called the 'amenities' of modern Benedictine life have been touched on perhaps sufficiently in chapter X. They have been a gradual growth throughout the ages, mainly due to the fact that since the eighth century the monks have been in holy orders; they mean no more than that Benedictines have kept pace with the progressive improvements in domestic conditions in all civilised life. Any kind of archeologisms or revivals of medievalisms, or conscious cultivation of the aesthetic and poetic side of monasticism, are quite out of keeping with the strong sense of reality that has at all times characterised Black Benedictines. Newman may be right in saying that there is a very real element of poetry in Benedictine life;[1] but the monks themselves were not aware of it. And St Benedict's monks were by no means 'pictures' or poetic objects, except in the sense that any hedger and ditcher or ploughman may lend himself to artistic treatment.

Akin to amenities is the matter of what may be called the 'minor luxuries,' as smoking. In most monasteries smoking is now allowed at discretion. This I believe is in accordance with the Rule. Not, of course, that St Benedict legislates for tobacco; but in the case of wine he lays down a principle that covers the case of all such indulgences: 'Licet legamus,' he says, 'though we read that wine is not for monks at all,[2] still as in our days monks will not be persuaded of this, let us at any rate accept it as a principle not to drink too much, but sparingly' (c. XL). I wonder is there any other religious rule in which such a sentence can be found!

Abstinence from flesh meat of four-footed animals is enjoined by the Rule (c. XXXIX); but in all the congregations, except the Subiaco 'a primaeva observantia,' the use of meat is conceded four days in the week during most of the year, and in some congregations on all days except those of the ecclesiastical abstinence. The general dispensation for meat four times a week was given by the Bull 'Benedictina,' 1336; but in the reforms of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries total abstinence was commonly enforced. One of the restorers of the English Congregation at the beginning of

[1] *Mission of St Benedict, passim.*

[2] In the 'Words of the Elders,' Rosweyd, V, iv, 31.

the seventeenth century declares the effects to be that 'mor asteries are made rather hospitals of sick persons than place to sing with joy the praises of God.'[1] And indeed, as w have seen (p. 44 note), there was an early view, held a Monte Cassino in the eighth century, that only quadruped were forbidden and fowls were allowed, a view acted on he and there in the Middle Ages. It may be said that a di tinction between the flesh of animals and of birds is not o that would appeal to the modern mind.[2]

Now we come to what is, for me, a real difficulty modern Benedictine life. In c. LXVI St. Benedict lays dov that all that is necessary for the life of the community shou be within the monastery precincts, 'that there may not necessity for the monks roaming abroad, because it is ve bad for their souls'; and in the next chapter he forbids thc that have been out to relate on their return what they h seen or heard outside, 'because it is utter destruction.' modern Benedictines go out of the monastery enclosure free with due permission, whenever occasion arises, such str inclusion not seeming to be one of the points of later d 'primitive observance'; and not only are things seen outsi spoken of on return, but in the most observant and even formed Benedictine monasteries the daily papers are taken a read freely. What troubles me is not the fact that monks out, for we know that St Benedict's monks did so on occasic nor the fact that they read the newspapers. It does not m the case to say that, as a matter of fact, they do not feel a the worse for it. Indeed, this precisely is the disquieting phe menon. It would be affectation for the modern monk to that his spiritual life has been impaired or his soul any the wc for his having been on a journey or having read the paper; the contrary we often think we feel the better for a few da change out of the monastery, and return reinvigorated braced up for our monastic life again. But according to Benedict we ought to feel the worse: 'omnino non exp animabus eorum'; 'plurima destructio est.' How is tl

[1] MS. at Downside.

[2] See a Maurist mémoire on the whole subject, *Revue Mabillon*, 1909, 220-4.

Is it that we have lost all touch with St Benedict's monachism? Is it a sign that all that has been said here is but specious special pleading, and that, except for the nuns and the Trappists, there is no true Benedictinism left in the world? Well, we may say that is not the judgement of the world,—the religious world I mean,—or of the Church, or of society. It seems to me that the answer lies in these considerations: the upbringing of monks, as of every one else, is in modern times utterly different from that of St Benedict's monks. From their childhood upwards till they come to the monastery they all have lived in the conditions of modern society, have been subjected to the influence of modern education, social intercourse, amusements, theatres, travel, novels, all the complexity of modern life. In the monastery they have been through an elaborate intellectual formation. All this has brought it about that contact with the world has not the same effect on them as it had on the simple men that lived at Monte Cassino under St Benedict; a railway journey, a visit to London, a newspaper, a novel, as a matter of fact, is not a cause of excitement or distraction or seduction. It does not lower their spiritual level. Their mind has been inured to such things from infancy. Still, we should not forget that our Holy Father did look on such things as dangerous to the monastic spirit, and should practise moderation and restraint in them as in all else, 'servata in omnibus parcitate' (c. XXXIX).

To conclude: we saw in chapter III that St Benedict instituted his monastery to be a 'school of the service of God,' the service being the threefold service of self-discipline, prayer, and work. Tested by these three elements modern Benedictine life may fairly claim to justify itself as a faithful presentation to the twentieth century of St Benedict's idea.

(1) *Self-discipline:* this is the personal work of the monk, his private spiritual life, known to God alone, and only by its outward results to men: 'By their fruits shall ye know them.' On this nothing need, or can, be said.

(2) *Prayer:* in regard to the public prayer, Benedictines universally will endorse Bishop Ullathorne's words:

'Benedictine "stability in the monastery" has the centre o its life in the divine office of the choir, chaunted by the unite brethren. The whole stability of the monastery gravitate round the stability of the choir, each duty of which is fixe to the moment. The very heart of the Benedictine life is th prolonged praising of God by the united voices of all th brethren.'[1] In nearly all the Benedictine monasteries of th present day, according to their circumstances, is the publi canonical office performed with devotion and dignity, an looked upon as pre-eminently the Work of God and th centre of the community life. Where it can be done, vesper commonly are chanted daily, and also there is the daily sun conventual mass. In most abbeys the total time spent in choi in the public worship of God is not much less than was regu lated for by St Benedict, and in many it is more. My ow monastery is not one of the reformed, and is one in which th monks lead probably as busy lives as in most; I ordinaril spend about three and a quarter hours each day at the celebra tion in choir of the divine office, including the conventua mass: we have seen that about four hours was probably th time allotted to the Opus Dei by St Benedict (chapter XVII To the time in choir must be added the private mass and othe private religious exercises, as mental prayer, etc., amounting t nearly two hours more. It is probably true to say that moder Benedictine monks spend more rather than less time daily i direct religious exercises than did St Benedict's monks.

(3) *Work:* the work done nowadays by Benedictines i intellectual and clerical in character: the study of theolog and other subjects, ecclesiastical and secular; pastoral work as preaching and the administration of the sacraments; educa tion. Perhaps the best account of the rationale of the chang from the primitive agricultural labour is that given by F Baker in the two chapters of *Sancta Sophia*, 'Contemplatio of the Primitive Monks,' and 'Excellency of Internal Affectiv Prayer.' Though the work done is quite different in cha acter, it is *work*, and so far forth it restores that element c Benedictine life as intended by St Benedict, which was reduce to such small proportions, if not wholly eliminated, under th

[1] *Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 310.

influence of the Cluny movement so largely dominating the Benedictinism of the Middle Ages.

My predecessor as abbot of Downside, Abbot Edmund Ford, wrote in 1896 the following account of the 'Benedictine Vocation':

Everyone is familiar with the magnificent ruins of our old Benedictine churches, and must have felt the sense of calm which even in their ruin these homes of the monastic life convey to the soul. At the same time, if he turns to the page of history and reads there the record of the marvellous works which the Benedictines have accomplished, marvellous in their greatness, in their diversity, and in their vitality, he will recognise that the calm of the Benedictine life is not the quiet of idleness, but the peace of unceasing work, carried on not for its own sake, but as being the means to the higher life, as being the obedience to the law of labour that lies on all men. A magnificent church, the glory of the sanctuary, the chant simple and massive, in which all can sing their prayer to God, continual industry, peaceful life, these are the things which strike us in the Benedictine monastery; and we ask ourselves what are the hidden forces which produce these same effects wherever the Benedictines settle and are free to follow their tradition? In every age and in every land, from St Benedict and the heights of Monte Cassino to New Nursia in the Australias, we recognise the same features. What is this life, this rule, which thus suits all times and all peoples, and which in every diversity of soil produces the same fruit? The answer seems simple. We find in the Rule of St Benedict not so much a number of details as a few main principles which, working in human nature, have produced that wonderful history of his order: principles which cannot grow antiquated or pass out of date, for they are not peculiar to any conditions of education, or race, or rank, or era, nor intended to meet any passing difficulties or trials in the life of the Church, but are as universal as is the human race. We may sum them up thus:

1. Benedictines live in community. Where they are found in any other condition it is for a time only, or by dispensation, or by reason of special orders of the Holy See, as is the case of the English Benedictines, whom the Holy See has charged with missionary work. But the normal life of Benedictines is the life of many living together, not for the sake of doing any particular work, but that they may carry out as far as is possible the full teaching of Christ on the perfection of human life,

2. It is characteristic of the Benedictines that they have no special work to the exclusion of other works. A Benedictine house takes up any work which is adapted to its peculiar circumstances, any work which may be dictated to it by its necessities. Thus we find Benedictines teaching in the poor schools and in the universities, practising the arts and following agriculture, undertaking the care of souls, or devoting themselves wholly to study. No work is foreign to the Benedictine, provided only it is compatible with living in community and with the performance of the divine office. This freedom in the choice of work was necessary in a rule which was to be suited to all times and places, but it was primarily the natural result of the end which St Benedict had in view, and in which he differs from the founders of later orders. These latter had in view some special work to which they wished their disciples to devote themselves; St Benedict's purpose was only to provide a rule by which any one might follow the Gospel counsels, and live, and work and pray, and save his soul.

3. We must next point out that the prayer of the Benedictines is the public office of the Church. The members of a community may have their private devotions, but their prayer as monks is the chanting of the office. In this they find their vocal prayer, their meditation, their 'examen,' their 'acts,' their morning and their evening prayer. The work of the monks carries them away to all parts of the monastery, but at early morning and at evening, again and again as the day wears on, all return to the church for the divine office, and go back once more to their work or to their rest.

4. Lastly, another secret of the character and influence of the Benedictine life seems to be that the monks of a monastery are bound together by ties which are particularly close. They are truly said to form a family. The old and young grow up together under the same roof, under the same discipline, around the same altar, until the old men pass away and the young grow old, and yet another generation is ready to receive from their hands, that are growing feeble, the work of the monastery; and thus generation succeeding generation the life goes on and the work never ceases.

The most noteworthy feature of this account, from our present point of view, is the fact that it is equally true of each phase of Benedictine life, of the life at Monte Cassino in St Benedict's day, of Medieval and Renascence Benedictinism, and of the Benedictinism of our own time: and this, not owing to mere vagueness, for the great lines are very definitely and strongly marked. That it should be possible thus to draw

out a formula that fits equally well each stage of Benedictine life from first to last, is the best possible confirmation of the thesis of this chapter, that the Benedictine Idea through the Centuries has, on the whole and in the great currents, kept faithful to St Benedict's Idea, and stands the tests of true development formulated by Cardinal Newman.[1]

[1] Above, p. 292.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BENEDICTINE WORK FOR THE WORLD

THE Benedictine name is associated with work, and the titl 'Benedictine Work for the World' suggests a subject of im mense scope, any adequate treatment of which would deman a book to itself. In a single chapter the merest sketch of th ground is all that can be given. Some such summary seem to be called for in a book on Benedictine Monachism.

In considering Benedictine works it is natural to begi with St Benedict, and to see what germs of future works ma be discerned in the Rule and in the Life of our Holy Fathe In the Rule we find manual work and reading prescribed a the occupation of the monks when not in church, and w know from many places of the Rule and from the Dialogue (ii, 3 *fin.*) that there were boy-monks in the monastery, wh received some sort of education from the monks. We are tol too, in the Dialogues (ii, 8 *fin.*, 19) how St Benedict preache to the still pagan or half-pagan inhabitants of the neighbou hood of Monte Casino, and made good Christians of them.

Here we have clearly foreshadowed the four princip forms of Benedictine work for the world:

(1) The Benedictine Apostolate;

(2) Benedictine work for Civilisation; the agricultur labours of St Benedict's monks, their clearing the ground a bringing it under cultivation, being the contribution to civilis tion nearest to hand and most urgently needed in the deva tated condition of Italy at the time;

(3) Benedictine Education;

(4) Benedictine Studies.

The last will be the subject of the following chapter, t other three will be dealt with in this.

APOSTOLATE

The Benedictine Apostolate was exercised chiefly among the Teutonic races of north-western Europe, but also among the Slavs of central Europe. I do not think the story has ever been told consecutively and as a whole, though it surely is a chapter of Benedictine history well worthy of being written. Dom Ursmer Berlière has indeed devoted to it a 'conference' of forty pages in his volume *L'Ordre monastique* (1912); but the subject calls for a substantive historical work. The story of the 'Conversion of Europe' has recently been told by Canon Charles Robinson in a book bearing that title (1917); and for the purpose of presenting, I believe for the first time, a conspectus of the work of the Benedictine Apostolate, probably nothing better can be done in the space available than to draw out a mere schedule of the mission fields and the names of the Benedictines that laboured in them, with references to the pages of Canon Robinson's book, where the full story is told with the needful references and maps. In such a summary I make no apology for accepting as Benedictines those accepted as such by Mabillon, whose criticism was discriminating.

ENGLAND.—The first Benedictine mission to the heathen was that sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great in 596, under St Augustine, the prior of his monastery of St Andrew on the Coelian Hill in Rome. The first band of missionaries were monks.[1] In a short time the mission effected the conversion of the Jutish kingdom of Kent. From Kent missions went forth to Essex and Northumbria, which were at first successful; but these countries soon relapsed into paganism, and their reconversion a generation later was not effected by Benedictines (Robinson, pp. 99-124; Ven. Bede is the authority). The 'Conversion of England' cannot be claimed as a Benedictine work. The greater part of the country was converted by the Hiberno-Scottish monks of St Columba from Iona, and by independent missionary bishops from the Continent, as Birinus and Felix.[2] The Benedictines were the pioneers in bringing Christianity to the English, but their permanent apostolate in England was

[1] We have seen already (p. 82), and shall see again (p. 354), that the best modern historical scholarship endorses the traditional belief that St Gregory and St Augustine and his companions were Benedictine monks.

[2] So Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, Bk. XI, iii, § v.

confined to Kent, which, in spite of a short set-back on King Ethelbert's death, never relapsed into paganism, Christianity being firmly established there by the labours of the Benedictine missionaries.

A generation later the Benedictine St Wilfrid spent five years (681-6) evangelising the Isle of Wight and the kingdom of Sussex and effected their permanent conversion (pp. 139, 142-5).

FRIESLAND.—The Frisians occupied the land bordering on the North Sea from the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Weser, and so Holland and part of Hanover. This was the second scene of Benedictine missionary enterprise. St Wilfrid was shipwrecked on the coast in 678, and spent some time preaching the Gospel to the Frisians (p. 332). The English St Willibrord came with twelve companions in 692, became bishop of Utrecht, and after labouring for half a century died in 738 (pp. 333-7).[1] Another Benedictine missionary was the Frank Wulfram (p. 338). Frisia was the scene of St Boniface's first missionary effort in 715, and of his last in 755, when he met his martyrdom. During the next half-century the Frisian Liudger and the English Willehad were Benedictines who laboured in Friesland, both being consecrated bishops (pp. 342-6).

GERMANY.—The English Benedictine Winfrid, better known by the name Boniface given him by Pope Gregory II, stands out as the greatest of all Benedictine missionaries, indeed as one of the greatest of all Christian missionaries, who by his thirty-five years of apostolate among the German nations laid the foundations of the German Church and earned the title 'Apostle of Germany.' His work among the Germans, which began in 719, falls under three heads: he brought the Gospel to races wholly pagan, as the Hessians and Saxons; he completed the conversion and consolidated the Christianity of nations already half converted, as Bavarians, Thuringians, Franconians; and he organised the church life of districts fully Christian, as the Frankish kingdom (pp. 356-80).[2] Among those who collaborated with St Boniface and carried on his work were several Benedictines, as the English Willibald and Wunnibald, his nephews, and Lullus, Burchard (and Wigbert); Benedictines, but not from England, were Pirminius, founder of Reichenau, Gregory, head of a great missionary seminary at Utrecht, and above all Sturm, founder of Fulda.

[1] Willibrord himself was a Benedictine, beginning as a monk under Wilfrid at Ripon. He studied in Ireland under Egbert, and it was thence that he and his companions went to Frisia; for this reason I do not count Suitbert and the others as Benedictines, even though Mabillon does.

[2] A full account of the labours of St Boniface (and also of St Willibrord) is given in Mrs Hope's second volume of *The Conversion of the Teutonic Races* (1872).

SCANDINAVIA.—St Willibrord had made a missionary expedition into Denmark; but the first serious attempt to introduce Christianity was made by St Ansgar, a Benedictine of Corbie near Amiens, who spent two years preaching in Denmark and Schleswig, 826-8 (p. 438). In 830 he became the first Christian missionary to Sweden, and a year later he was consecrated bishop of Hamburg. The rest of his life, till 865, he spent in organising, and also participating in, missionary work in Sweden and Denmark. He is called the Apostle of Sweden (pp. 472-9).

There is reason for believing that Sigfrid or Sigward, the first Christian missionary and bishop in Norway, *cir.* 1000, who also laboured in northern Sweden, was an English Benedictine from Glastonbury (pp. 451 *sqq.*).[1]

WESTERN SLAVS.—Benedictines played a great part in the conversion of the Slavonic races, which during the ninth and tenth centuries occupied all the territory to the east of the Elbe and the Saale. The Wends, who occupied the Baltic coast at the mouth of the Oder, were the first Slavonic race among whom was made a sustained effort to preach Christianity; this was by the Bavarian Benedictine Boso, bishop of Merseburg, who laboured in Wendland from 936 to 970, and is called 'Apostle of the Wends' (p. 392). From 1125 to 1154 the work was renewed by Vicelin, bishop of Oldenburg, a Benedictine (p. 396).

Adalbert, bishop of Prague, 982, first tried to extend the Christian religion among the Bohemians (p. 299), and then became the first missionary in Prussia, before the German conquest, where he was martyred in 997 (p. 425). His work among the Prussians was carried on by another Benedictine, Bruno of Querfurt, martyred in 1008 (p. 426).

HUNGARY.—The Einsiedeln monk Wulfgang and also Adalbert of Prague did pioneer missionary work at the end of the tenth century, just before St Stephen came to the throne (p. 306).

If this were a mere recital of names many more might be added; and numerous unnamed Benedictines went forth from the monasteries of Frankland to take part in planting the Gospel among the Germans, and in turn from the monasteries of Germany to plant it among the Slavs. The Benedictine Mission to the Heathen in northern Europe came to an end about the year 1000. The work is, perhaps, best summed up

[1] The story is told by Edmund Bishop, in an article entitled 'English Hagiology,' *Dublin Review*, 1885; he speaks also of the Missions of Wilfrid, Willibrord, and Boniface.

by the fact that in common parlance the title Apostle of the English (shared by St Gregory and St Augustine), Apostle of Holland, Apostle of Germany, Apostle of Sweden, Apostle of the Wends, Apostle of the Prussians, are all borne by Benedictine monks.

It is proper to mention certain later apostolic labours of Benedictines. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the monks of the English Congregation laid themselves out to take part, along with the secular clergy and the members of the other orders, in the then dangerous and heroic mission into England; eight of them died as martyrs, many more endured the hardships of the prisons of the seventeenth century, and all took the risk of a like fate. Early in the nineteenth century took place what might be called the Downside Mission to the Convicts in Australia, under Dr Ullathorne and Bishop Polding;[1] also the Mission of the Spanish Benedictines of New Nursia under Bishop Salvado to the natives of Western Australia. Various American abbeys have worked missions among the Indians; Cistercians are carrying on missionary work in South Africa and Silvestrines in Ceylon. In the year 1884 was formed the Congregation of St Ottilien, in Bavaria, for the Foreign Mission; there are one hundred priests and two hundred lay brothers, and they work a Vicariate in Central Africa with a number of missions.[2] In 1905 five of the monks, one being a bishop, were killed in their character as Christian missionaries by the natives.

## CIVILISATION

After conversion must come the christianising and civilising of the races converted. These two processes the Benedictines carried out together, both in the lands they had themselves converted, and in those converted by others. The Benedictine

[1] The story is told in Bishop Ullathorne's *Autobiography*; in D. Norbert Birt's *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, and succinctly in the 'Centenary Number' of the *Downside Review*, 1914.

[2] New Nursia is of great interest, being a reproduction in the nineteenth century of the early Benedictine ways of Christianising and civilising a heathen population. The story is told in the last chapter of Dom N. Birt's *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, and in an article in *Dublin Review*, 1881, by Cardinal Gasquet; in *Downside Review*, 1896, is an account of a visit there.

[3] Heimbucher, *Orden und Kongregationen*, ed. 2, I, 340.

contribution to civilisation opens out endless vistas; its magnitude has been generously recognised on all hands by historians, even those least in sympathy with monastic ideals. Dom Berlière has attempted, with a wealth of knowledge, a sketch of the subject in seventy pages, illustrated by one hundred and forty references to the best modern authorities on the multitudinous topics he touches on; but it is hardly more than a catalogue put into presentable literary form.[1] The reclaiming of waste land, agriculture, farming, horticulture, industries, and commerce, all are passed in review. Then come a group of benefactions under the heads of hospitality, almsgiving, care of the poor and the sick. Passing by for the present education and letters, there was the transcription of manuscripts, whereby Latin literature was preserved, the writings alike of the classical authors and of the Fathers and the ecclesiastical writers. The arts too owed much of their development to the monasteries; above all architecture, but also sculpture and the plastic arts, and stained-glass and illumination.

And hand in hand with this slow process of civilisation went that other process, even slower, of christianisation, whereby those rude races, at first necessarily only half converted, were by degrees brought under the yoke of Christ and were fashioned into a new Christendom of the West.

Instead of the fruitless task of attempting to depict all this in detail, it will be more profitable to characterise, by recording the impressions of a few competent judges, the methods whereby the Benedictines effected their work of civilising and christianising western Europe.

And first let Cardinal Newman speak:

> St Benedict found the world, physical and social, in ruins, and his mission was to restore it in the way, not of science, but of nature, not as if setting about to do it, not professing to do it by any set time or by any rare specific or by any series of strokes, but so quietly, patiently, gradually, that often, till the work was done, it was not known to be doing. It was a restoration, rather than a visitation, correction, or conversion. The new world which he helped to create was a growth rather than a structure. Silent men were observed about the country, or discovered in the forest, digging, clearing,

[1] *L'Ordre monastique*, 'L'œuvre civilisatrice.' See also Heimbucher, *op. cit.* § 41.

and building; and other silent men, not seen, were sitting in the cold cloister, tiring their eyes, and keeping their attention on the stretch, while they painfully deciphered and copied and re-copied the manuscripts which they had saved. There was no one that 'contended, or cried out,' or drew attention to what was going on; but by degrees the woody swamp became a hermitage, a religious house, a farm, an abbey, a village, a seminary, a school of learning, and a city. Roads and bridges connected it with other abbeys and cities, which had similarly grown up; and what the haughty Alaric or fierce Attila had broken to pieces, these patient meditative men had brought together and made to live again (*Mission of St Benedict*, § 9; reprint, p. 67).

Prefixed to vol. iv of the edition of Giraldus Cambrensis in the Rolls series (1873) is a preface by the late Professor J. S. Brewer, containing much that is excellent on monasticism. The following extract is to our present purpose:

Christianity, as exhibited to the rude Anglo-Saxon, was exhibited also in practical lessons of life, co-operation, and free labour—of perfect obedience, order, regularity, economy, with all the wondrous results of which monasticism was the type and the example. If men know how to farm and to drain and till the land scientifically; if they know how colleges may be built and large households maintained without confusion; if they have learned to value economy, punctuality, and dispatch; nay more, if the minor obligations of social life, the unwritten laws of natural respect, good breeding, and politeness, have grown up amongst men, these all were derived from the monasteries; for their discipline reached from the highest to the lowliest duties of man, as if all were bound together in one indissoluble union. It allowed no fervour of devotion to be pleaded as excuse for neglect or waste or untidiness; no urgency of labour as a set-off for want of punctuality; no genius or skill or rank as an exemption from the tribute of respect, consideration, and kindliness that is due to others. The broken fragments of their frugal meal were as carefully gathered up to be given to the poor, their clothes washed, mended, and put away, their kitchen utensils and linen, their spades and implements of husbandry kept in as trim order and ready for use, as if their spiritual advancement had exclusively depended upon these things. We recognise the value of such habits now. Waste, dirt, and irregularity are as great enemies to virtue now as they were then, and no less mischievous. But the lesson familiar to us all was new to our forefathers, and therefore the more impressive to men accustomed to waste and disorder, the most inveterate evils of savage and uncivilised life. The court, the great

lord and landowner, the universities, the city company, the merchant with his ledger, the farmer, the architect, the artist, the musician, and the author, owe just so much to the monk as is the difference between the rude untutored efforts of the savage and the disciplined and developed powers of cultivated genius, energy, taste, and imagination. Nor were all forms of manual labour, in a lower degree, without their obligations to monasticism. The stone-mason, the jeweller, the worker in brass and iron, the carver of wood, the joiner, the glass-maker, the weaver and embroiderer, the maltster, the brewer, and the baker, even the hedger, the ditcher, and the gardener, learned each the lesson of his peculiar craft from these societies of well-bred and educated men, who took their turn at the trowel or the dung-cart, and were deft and skilful alike in the kitchen, the brew-house, and the bakehouse, in the workshop, and in the field, as they were in illuminating manuscripts, in choral music, in staining a glass window, or erecting a campanile. Talk, indeed, of the aristocracy of labour! Why, the very notion of such a thing was as inconceivable to the old world, as it would have been to us, but for the disciples of St Benedict. . . . If the monks feasted on gaudy or memorial days, the poor feasted also. If they doubled their dishes and their pittances, the poor shared the luxury. . . . Without the monasteries a country life would have presented to men, especially to the labourer, one dreary round of unalloyed and hopeless drudgery; of fasting days without festivals, of work without mirth or holidays (pp. xxxiii-xxxvi).

The influence of the monasteries on the social life of the countryside, here touched on, is well brought out by Cardinal Gasquet in the preliminary chapter on 'Monastic England' in *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* (original edition). In the *Sketch of Monastic History*, so often put under contribution in these pages, he shows that the methods whereby the monks effected the christianising of the peoples were the same as those whereby they effected their civilisation, the two processes going on together:[1]

It is not too much to say that few nations of the modern world have been converted to Christianity, or tutored in the arts of peace, except through the medium of monasticism. In view of this broad fact, it is impossible to doubt that the monastic system must possess some strange power, some special gift of influencing bodies of men. A glance at the monuments which these great men have left

[1] Canon Robinson cites a similar estimate from Skene's *Celtic Scotland*, ii, 73 (*Conversion of Europe*, p. 13).

behind them will reveal the secret of their power, and the principle in the working of which they assured their success. Canterbury, Fulda, Salzburg, St Gall, and the thousand abbeys which existed, or still exist, in Europe, all testify to the monastic life which the apostles of the Western nations carried with them into the countries they evangelised. The monastery was the pulpit of the monk-apostle, and his power for good lay not in his words chiefly, but in the example of his monastic life (p. viii).

The monk is pre-eminently the apostle. But his apostolate is not exercised to its full extent as an individual. A single man, though he be a saint, is but one. He comes and he goes; he lives his little space and is gone. Even a Francis Xavier could not convert a nation or build up a Church in India or Japan. The Christian life is not merely the life of an individual, it is the life of a society, and as such it cannot be illustrated in its relation and practical workings by the example of any one person. To establish a Christian nation it is necessary to present for the imitation of the people who are to compose it, not the bare laws and regulations of the Church, but an actual pattern of a Christian society (p. x).

History teaches us that the practical Romans effected the subjugation of countries to their empire, not so much by the force of arms as by means of the gradual influence of the 'colonies' they planted among the conquered races. These bodies of men were the real but unobserved conquerors of the world. They brought with them Roman laws and customs, Roman arts and civilisation, and by living among the people induced them of their own accord to adopt the manners, the language, and name of their conquerors. If the bishops and clergy are the rulers and governors of the Church's empire, and the religious orders its armies and its garrisons, the work effected by the monastic order may not inaptly be compared to that of the Roman colonies. By the mere fact of settling among a people, and exhibiting to them the excellence and beauty of the Christian life, they won them insensibly to adopt the Christian creed and name, as by exhibiting the arts of peace in operation before the eyes of the uncultivated races of the Western world the monks taught them the value of a civilised life (p. xvi).

## EDUCATION

We know from St Benedict's Life (Dialogues, ii, 3) that he received boys into the monastery, and there are many references in the Rule to 'pueri' and 'infantes.' These boys were intended to be monks; nay, they were monks, dedicated

to the service of God from their infancy by their parents, as was Samuel (c. LIX).[1] Little is known of the earliest workings of the Benedictine monastic schools, and welcome light upon the subject is brought by Paul Warnefrid's commentary, which, so far as I know, has not yet been used to illustrate this side of Benedictine life and work. It will therefore be of interest to construct out of the scattered notes a connected picture, since here we have our first glimpse of Benedictine education.

St Benedict does not distinguish between 'children' (infantes) and 'boys' (pueri), but groups them together up to the age of fifteen (c. LXX); with Paul, however, they are children up to seven, boys from seven to fourteen, and from fourteen to twenty-eight they are youths (adolescentes). It is a surprise to find definite provision for children of five, four, and even three. If there be ten children they should have three or four masters assigned, as there should always be some one with them. The abbot is to take the utmost care in the appointment of the masters, selecting those who have themselves learned discipline. No one else is allowed to punish the boys, because if this were permitted to stupid or careless persons, they might by mere terror make the children worse. Even the masters are to punish with discretion, making sure that a beating is the best manner of correction in the particular case, and is not likely to do more harm than good. The master should deal with the boys temperately and not beat them too much or ill-treat them; the young monks are to be severely dealt with, 'but the time of the children has not come yet.' A master who is really devoted to the boys, should he forget himself and in anger strike them beyond due measure, is not to be removed, but corrected and admonished not to do it again, and kept in his office, because of his good solicitude for the boys. The children are to be given fish and milk and eggs, and flesh meat as they may need it, and are not to be stinted; they should eat frequently and not much at a time. When any boy is particularly good the abbot should send him a special plate of dainties at dinner. The abbot is to give them good clothing; and soap and towels and combs are to be provided in the place where they wash. 'On account

[1] Cf. Newman, *Benedictine Centuries* (*Schools*), § 3; reprint, p. 118.

of human nature, that it be not broken,' each week the master is to take them out to the fields and let them play (jocare) for an hour. In winter he is to take them to the calefactory, or room with a fire, but must see that they do not romp or play there. All this presents a pleasing picture, softening the apparent severity of St Benedict's ideas on the treatment of boys. The only thing that seems to us unreasonable is that these children were present at the night office; but a passage in Aelfric shows that this was the general practice.

In regard to their education in the more technical sense the instruction given to the boys, Warnefrid's details are of special interest (c. XXXVII). They are to be carefully taught (debent doceri sollicite), and when a learned guest comes, one of the boys should be produced and tested; he is to be told to speak to the guest on grammar, or the chant, or the 'computus,' or some art. The master should observe whether he speaks with the guest politely and modestly and does not look about; and when the guest has gone the boy is to be admonished if he asked questions carelessly or answered timidly or forwardly.

In the foregoing list of subjects we recognise the 'trivium' or first part of the curriculum of a liberal education, the portion intended to be covered by schoolboys. It consisted of the three branches: grammar, logic, rhetoric. The 'some other art' in Paul's list of subjects certainly refers to the two last named branches.[1] The 'trivium,' supplemented by the 'chant' and the 'computus,' or method of calculating the calendar and fixing the date of Easter,[2] was the recognised course of secondary education all through the Middle Ages, inherited from the Roman schools.[3] 'Grammatica' meant, of course, a great deal more than 'grammar'; it meant what is now called 'Latin,' the study of the Latin classical authors, with composition in prose and verse. By far the best account known to me of the studies and education of the Benedictine monasteries

[1] 'De grammatica, aut de cantu, aut de computo, vel de aliqua arte' (c. XXXVII).

[2] The 'computus' may not seem a very valuable subject of study; but any one who will look at the general Rubrics of the Missal or Breviary will see that the mastering of the intricacies of cycles and epacts and indictions, etc., was a mental gymnastic, by no means contemptible.

[3] See Leach, *Schools of Medieval England*, c. ii.

is that given by Newman in the second of the two essays, so often referred to in these pages, that on the 'Benedictine Centuries,' or 'Schools' (§§ 3, 4; reprint, 113-39); we may refer also to such a work as Sandys' *History of Classical Scholarship* (I, cc. xxiv-xxvii), and Mullinger's *Schools of Charles the Great*, especially c. iv.

The boys spoken of by Paul Warnefrid no doubt were boy-monks, and in the early ages those educated in the monasteries either were monks, or at least were being brought up on the supposition that they were likely to become monks. It is not questioned by any one that at all times there were in the Benedictine houses interior or cloistral schools in which such alumni, and also the novices and young monks, were educated; but to suppose, as Mr. A. F. Leach does, that up to the end of the Middle Ages and into the Renascence nothing was taught in the monasteries except 'psalm-singing and a little elementary Latin grammar,'[1] is grotesquely at variance with facts, and is sufficiently refuted by the evidence of Paul Warnefrid, even before the Carolingian movement. What is open to question, and what calls for a thorough investigation, is the subject of 'external' schools, in which the monks taught boys destined for careers in the world, whether as clerics or lay men. Such schools were part of the programme of Boniface, and were opened in the various monasteries he established for the consolidation of his missionary enterprises. In 787 Charles the Great enacted that in all monasteries as well as cathedrals these external schools should be formed, and in fact, as the result of this decree, the principal monasteries did open such an external school in addition to its cloistral school.[2] Benedict of Aniane, however, sought to reverse this policy, one of the Capitula of Aachen, 817, ordaining that 'there be not a school in monasteries, except for oblati,' or future monks. In spite of this, the external schools seem to have gone on at many of the principal monasteries of the Empire. But the Cluniac movement was inimical to the schools, as it was to studies and to manual labour, and to everything except the church services; and under its influence, as Dom Berlière says, 'during a long

[1] *Op. cit.*, preface and consistently throughout the book.

[2] Mullinger, *Schools of Charles the Great*, p. 132; cf. Rashdall, *Universities*, I, ii.

period studies waned and education gradually passed from the hands of the Benedictines.'[1] The question of external monastic schools in the later Middle Ages is one that can only be asked here, without any attempt being made to answer it.[2]

In modern times, since the Reformation and the Wars of Religion, the external schools have again become common in Benedictine monasteries. Though it is not well known, the Maurists had a number of excellent secular colleges.[3] At the present day, secondary education, whether in boarding-schools or in day-schools, has come to be perhaps the commonest and best recognised form of Benedictine external work, most of the Black Monk congregations laying themselves out for it. At the reconstitution of the Hungarian Congregation in 1802, the Government made it a condition that the monks should chiefly devote themselves to secondary education; they have six colleges with 2000 pupils. The Austrian monasteries have twelve large colleges with nearly 3000 pupils. The Swiss Congregation has four colleges with 800 pupils, and the Bavarian twelve with 2100. In all these congregations the education is under the full control of the State. In the five schools of the English Congregation are 700 pupils; in those of the Cassinese are 400; and all the American monasteries have schools with a total of 3000 pupils. All told, large and small there were in 1914 more than a hundred schools attached to the Benedictine monasteries, with an aggregate of over 15,000 pupils.

[1] *L'Ordre monastique*, p. 115.

[2] The one best qualified to answer the question is Dom Berlière, who had an article on the subject in *Revue Bénédictine*, 1889. He writes to me that since then he has accumulated a mass of material. A tract on the whole subject of Benedictine schools, internal and external, would be a valuable contribution to Benedictine history. I believe it would appear that cases of external schools, or at any rate schools to which external pupils, clerical or lay, were admitted, have at all times existed even though they were the exceptions. It would be as far from the truth to suppose that such schools for 'externs' existed at all, or nearly all, the Benedictine monasteries, as to suppose that they did not exist at any of them.

[3] See a note by Dom Berlière, 'Die Lehranstalten der Mauriner,' in *Studien und Mittheilungen, O.S.B.*, 1887; it is based on Abbé Sicard's *Les études classiques avant la Révolution*, 1887 (pp. 447-92). Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Maurists had thirty secondary and six military schools. These schools enjoyed a high reputation, especially that of Sorèze.

## PARISHES

Another activity of Benedictine monks in modern times has to be spoken of in this place. At the present day in various countries Benedictines serve parishes belonging to the monasteries, and have the cure of over a million souls. In most of these parishes the monks live outside the monastery. In Switzerland, Bavaria and Hungary the proportion of priests thus serving parishes away from the monasteries is relatively small; but in Austria, England, and America the proportion is considerable. America is a new country in which the Catholic population is increasing by leaps and bounds, and the call to provide churches, schools, parishes is paramount. But a striking feature of the Benedictine parishes in the United States is that, in favourable conditions, the parish-houses tend to grow into monasteries; some of the abbeys have within living memory passed through the stages: station, mission, parish-house, dependent priory, independent priory, abbey. In England, too, since the repeal of the penal laws, owing to Catholic emancipation, the Irish immigration, the effects of the Oxford Movement, and the Catholic revival, the nineteenth century was a period of great and rapid expansion, and the Benedictines took their share in the vast work of reconstruction and in laying the foundations of the parochial system that has been set up within the past few months. For England and the United States both continued to be 'missionary countries,' and the parishes were technically 'missions,' up to the promulgation of the Codex of Canon Law a year ago, which brought about their formal erection into canonical parishes. Thus Austria is the only country in which the conditions of church life have been normal and long established, where a large proportion of the Benedictine priests (about half) live and work on parishes away from the monastery.

It must be made clear that the right and propriety of Benedictines exercising the functions of the pastoral office, administering the Sacraments, preaching, undertaking parochial work, is not in question, and has not been for many ages. This was settled once for all by St Gregory the Great, when he sent the band of monks to evangelise the English; we have seen, too, his theory on the 'two lives,' spoken to his

Benedictine monks, and how he insists on the necessity of al undertaking good works of the active life for the religious gooc of others (above, pp. 97-100). Since that time it has beer recognised that monks may lawfully and laudably exercise the pastoral care. And in such a case as the abbey of St Bonifaz at Munich, where the community live their full monastic life together, and for their external work are most of them devotec to the care of the great parish attached to the monastery, numbering some 50,000 souls, it will be recognised that there is no better Benedictine work and life than that. What has been in question is Benedictines living permanently out of their monastery and out of the conditions of community life and normal Benedictine observance, for the sake of serving parishes, singly or two or three together.

We have spoken of St Gregory, and he is the natural starting-point for the consideration of any such question. His attitude was this: if a bishop, through shortage of priests wished to secure the services of a monk for a parish, he could ordain him with the abbot's consent, and take him out of the monastery and place him in the parish: but the monk's connexion with the monastery was completely severed, so that he was no longer a monk, but entered the ranks of the diocesan clergy.[1] Thus we see that while St Gregory would send monks on a mission to the heathen, he would not allow them to act as parochial clergy.

During the century of consolidation and organisation that followed the first preaching of the Gospel in England and in Germany, the Benedictine monks, like the Irish monks of St Columba in England and of St Columbanus in Central Europe played their part in the christianising of the peoples; but not by serving in parishes. Bishop Ullathorne's dictum, 'it was not parishes they planted, but monasteries,'[2] is verified by the facts: St Augustine at once established the monastery of SS Peter and Paul (later St Augustine's) at Canterbury, where the

[1] 'Ulterius illic nec potestatem aliquam nec licentiam habeat habitandi (Epp. viii, 15, *al.* 17). Mr. Dudden goes into the question fully, giving numerous references (*Gregory the Great*, ii, 189-94). D. Rothenhäusler arrives at the same conclusions in art. 'Gregor I und die Stabilität des Mönchs' (*Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte*, 1914, p. 156).

[2] *Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 315.

monks lived under their own abbot;[1] St Wilfrid established a monastery at Selsey in Sussex; St Willibrord one at Utrecht; St Boniface those of Fulda, Fritzlar, and half a dozen more all over Germany: and their missionary efforts were carried on from these centres.

In England from the date, *cir.* 700, when St Theodore's system of church organisation had got into working order, until the Conquest, there is no evidence of Benedictines serving parishes, or indeed taking part in the pastoral work of the country, except as bishops; and in this England may safely be taken as an index of what was going on abroad. After about 1000, however, a series of enactments of Councils begins in many parts of Europe, which show that the practice was coming in of monks serving parishes. A Benedictine abbot consulted Rupert of Deutz (*cir.* 1100) on the point, and his answer was in favour of its lawfulness.[2] At the Third Lateran Council, 1179, however, the following Canon was enacted: 'Monachi non singuli per villas et oppida, seu ad quascunque parochiales ponantur ecclesias, sed in maiore conventu aut cum aliquibus fratribus maneant' (Mausi, xxii, 224). There were numerous

[1] Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, i, 33. In view of a long-standing controversy it is to be noted that while the Benedictines lived in their monastery, St Augustine lived at the Cathedral of Christchurch with a body of cathedral clergy who were secular priests and clerics. That this was the case is evident from St Gregory's words that those of them not in holy orders were free to marry and to live apart and receive their share of the cathedral income (Gregory's Answer to Augustine's First Question, Bede, i, 27). This is proof positive that such clerics were not Benedictines or monks of any kind. Thus it is seen that by 602 there was a body of secular clergy in Kent as well as the Benedictine monks. Montalembert and others after him have said that for a century there were no priests in England except monks, Benedictine or Hiberno-Scottish; but this is not in accord with the facts. St Gregory's injunction to St Augustine (*ibid.*), that being a monk he should live in common with his clerics and establish in England the common life, was not an injunction to establish monasteries, but to institute the common life of the secular clergy, after the pattern set by Eusebius of Vercelli and St Augustine (above, p. 17). This manner of life had a great vogue in England and on the Continent, where (though not in England till the Conquest) it was called the 'canonical life,' and was the object of much legislation under Charles the Great and later. At the present day it is represented by such institutes as the Fathers of the Oratory. If it be suggested that the Canterbury Cathedral clergy were a mixed body of secular clergy and monks, it has to be said that the presence there of the secular clergy is proved by the evidence of the only contemporary document bearing on the subject; the presence of monks is no more than a conjecture, based on the fact that at a later date (tenth century ?) Christ Church, Canterbury, was a Benedictine monastery.

[2] Migne, P.L. clxx, 541.

re-enactments by Provincial Councils of this prohibition o monks dwelling alone. On the question whether two migh live together in a parish, there was a difference of opinio among canonists, some saying it was lawful, others that i could be done only by dispensation.[1] In the Middle Ages al the great abbeys had a number of parishes incorporated o 'appropriated.' This meant that the tithes went to the abbe and a vicar was appointed to the parish with a fixed salary the balance going to swell the abbey revenues: no doubt a abuse. It would be a mistake to suppose that the parishe thus belonging to the abbeys were served by the monks. Th communities were the patrons and presented secular priests t the bishops for appointment as vicars: there were variou ecclesiastical laws on the subject. The salaries paid to th vicars were often inadequate, and in England in the reign o Richard II the legislature intervened to secure that the vica should be well and sufficiently endowed; and on the mon asteries trying to evade the law by filling the vicarages wit members of their own bodies, a law was enacted under Henr IV forbidding vicarages to be filled by any but secular clergy men.[2]

Such laws of both Church and State are evidence tha monks did serve parishes; but none are in a position to mak any generalisation as to the frequency with which this wa done, except those who have examined on an extended scal the documents wherein the evidence is contained, as episcopa registers, visitations, etc. In regard to England, such an on is Cardinal Gasquet, and his conclusion is: 'The Augustinia canons not infrequently served the churches in their ow patronage; the monks as a matter of the rarest exceptio only.'[3] Another such was Edmund Bishop, and his conclusio was the same: 'The difficulty is to find a case in which Benedictine served a parish.' Another such witness is Re

[1] The principal facts are brought together by Thomassin, *Discipline de l'Église*, I, Bk. iii, c. 22. See also Molitor, *Capita Selecta*, § 115.

[2] 'That the vicar be well and sufficiently endowed' (15 Richard II, c. 6 'That in every appropriated church a secular parson be ordained vicar perpetua and that no religious be in anywise made vicar in any appropriated churc (4 Henry IV, c. 12).

[3] *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, 'Introduction,' p. xxix (p. x in abridged ed.).

F. W. Weaver, editor of the volume *Somerset Incumbents*, being the lists of incumbents of Somerset churches from the earliest times. Glastonbury had twenty-one appropriated parishes in Somerset, Bath had fifteen, and twenty-three more belonged to other Benedictine houses. In order to compile his lists Mr. Weaver has been through the episcopal registers, wills, and all available sources of information; he writes in response to my question: 'I know of no case in which a Benedictine monk was presented to a living; Benedictine monks never served parochial cures.' Mr. Weaver has forgotten isolated cases recorded in his book, of a monk of Westminster holding a parish, and of another, 'nuper monachus de Monteacute'; in neither case did the patronage belong to any monastery.[1] In the list of monks of Westminster there is record of one monk in 1398, and another in 1406, receiving a papal indult to hold a benefice with cure of souls.[2]

This may suffice: what was the case in England until the end of the Middle Ages may reasonably be taken as substantially the case in other countries.[3] The practice of monks serving parishes out of the conditions of Benedictine conventual life is, as a system, a growth of modern times. It is now allowed by the Church where there is good reason for it. But if judged by the standard of Benedictine principle, St Benedict's 'usque ad mortem in monasterio perseverantes' rings through the ages as the expression of his ideal.

[1] *Somerset Incumbents*, pp. 4, 9.

[2] Pearce, *Monks of Westminster*, pp. 115, 125.

[3] When visiting the Austrian abbeys I made inquiries on the point: in one I was told that the monks had themselves served the parishes since the twelfth century; in others that the practice had set in after the Wars of Religion in the seventeenth century, or after the Napoleonic wars in the nineteenth.

# CHAPTER XX

## BENEDICTINE STUDIES

THE tenor of what has gone before has made it clear that intellectual life and intellectual work as such had no place in St Benedict's programme. At Lerins, a century before St Benedict, a vigorous intellectual life prevailed, so that it became almost a school of theologians and controversialists. But the tradition of studies and learning, which in aftertimes made an entry into the Benedictine monasteries, is to be traced back to Cassiodorus, the contemporary of St Benedict, who, after serving the great Ostrogothic king Theodoric as minister for thirty years, retired about the year 540, a few years before St Benedict's death, to his property at Squillace in Calabria, and there constructed the monastery called Vivarium, in which he passed the last forty years of his life. Accounts of Cassiodorus and his monastery, and of the studies he promoted among his monks, are to be found in the recognised sources of information. The following abstract is made from Mr Dudden's book, so often referred to in these pages.[1]

In founding the monastery Cassiodorus' principal aim was to provide an asylum for the humanities in a barbarous and destructive age—to establish a school of learning, in which the sacred, patristic, and classical writings might be carefully studied, transcribed, and preserved. To him the ideal monk was a student, primarily of Divine wisdom, but also of the productions of human genius. 'For by the study of secular literature,' he said, 'our minds are trained to understand the Scriptures themselves.' Hence, with incredible pains and at great cost, Cassiodorus collected what must, in those days, have been an exceptionally large and varied library, containing

[1] Other accounts are to be found in Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, Bk. V, i; Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders*, Bk. V, c. 13; Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship*, I, c. xiv; and many more.

manuscripts suited to the requirements of every class of student. For the theologians were provided, in addition to carefully collated copies of the Scriptures, the writings of the Latin Fathers, and the best works of the Easterns, either translated or else in the original Greek. For the grammarians there were 'the illustrious poets and orators,' the study of whom, Cassiodorus hoped, would refine the style of his monks as well as widen their intellectual outlook. For scholars who were interested in other branches of learning, the capacious cupboards of the library contained the best works extant on their several subjects, whether it was history, geography, music, or scientific agriculture. . . . Enthusiast as he was in the collection of manuscripts, Cassiodorus was no less anxious for their propagation by transcription. 'Of all the works that can be accomplished by manual labour,' he writes, 'none pleases me so much as the work of the copyists—if only they will copy correctly.' To secure uniformity and accuracy in transcription, Cassiodorus compiled from the precepts of ten grammarians a treatise on orthography, and commended it to the careful perusal of the 'antiquarii.' . . . But though Cassiodorus hoped to make his monastery pre-eminently a home of sound learning, he was not so pedantic as to suppose that all who dwelt in it would take kindly to study. He arranged, therefore, that other employments should be provided for those who were unable or unwilling to engage in purely intellectual pursuits. . . . Yet Cassiodorus was the first man in Italy to recognise the possibilities of the convent as a school of liberal culture. He opened out for the Italian religious an entirely new sphere of activity (*Gregory the Great*, ii, 170-2).

That Cassiodorus was in any way beholden to St Benedict is against all likelihood; Cassian appears to have been his authority on the monastic life.

But though St Benedict did not introduce intellectual pursuits into his monastery, he did assign a considerable portion of time each day, as much as three to four hours, to the reading of Holy Scripture or the Fathers; and he encourages his monks to such reading by these words: 'What page or what passage of Holy Scripture is not the very exactest rule of life? Or what book of the holy Catholic Fathers does not resound with this one theme, how we may take the shortest course to our Creator?' (c. LXXIII). There is no doubt that the steady devotional reading of the Fathers, day in and day out, will in the case of men of ordinary intelligence produce,

if not scholarship, a type of culture that may be called intellectual and even learned, in a very real sense. We have seen that St Benedict himself became well-read in the great Latin Fathers, and may truly be said to have known not only his Bible and his Cassian, but also, in an adequate sense, his Leo, his Jerome, and his Augustine (pp. 164-7).

This side of the life would tend to be emphasised by the altered conditions consequent on the migration from Monte Cassino to Rome in 581—the change from country to town life, and the gradual introduction of the practice, from about 600 onwards, whereby the monks were advanced to holy orders. We find St Gregory impressing on an abbot the duty of sacred study for monks: 'I do not find that such brethren of your monastery as I see give time to reading. Wherefore you must needs consider how great a sin it is, if, when God gives you sustenance from the offerings of others, you neglect to learn His commandments.'[1]

We have seen in the preceding chapter that the psalms, which were committed to memory, and the Latin classical authors formed the staple of the education given to the boys who in all ages were brought up in the monasteries either as monks or to be monks. Thus it came about that most monks had been brought up on the Latin classics; and what had been their study as boys became their recreation as men. In select cases standards were attained that rightly claim the title of scholarship: such were Aldhelm, Bede, Boniface, and several of the Carolingian monks as Rabanus, Walafrid Strabo, Paschasius Radbert, Lupus of Ferrières, all spoken of by Dr Sandys in his *History of Classical Scholarship*. Of course such eminent examples are not to be taken as specimens of the classical attainments of the monks of the Benedictine centuries; but it is not going beyond the evidence to say that the general intellectual life of the monasteries was permeated by a tincture of classical culture, bespeaking some fair level of education.[2] That the classics were commonly read in the Cluniac houses is shown by a twelfth-century Dialogue between a Cluniac and a Cistercian, one of the points brought up

[1] *Epp.* iii, 3 (Ewald).

[2] The passage of Newman referred to above, p. 325, may here be mentioned again.

against Cluny by the latter being that the monks habitually read the pagan Latin writers.[1]

The Latin classics, however, were not the business of life for monks, except for such as were masters in the cloistral schools, and when we speak of 'Benedictine Studies' we have in mind something else—studies definitely professional for monks, ecclesiastical and religious in scope. Cardinal Newman characterises these studies as follows:

> They would be naturally led by their continual perusal of the Scriptures and the Fathers to attempt to compare and adjust these two chief sources of theological truth with each other. Hence resulted the peculiar character of the religious works of what may be especially called the Benedictine period, the five centuries between St Gregory and St Anselm. The age of the Fathers was well-nigh over; the age of the schoolmen was yet to come; the ecclesiastical writers of the intervening period employed themselves for the most part in arranging and digesting the patristical literature which had come down to them; they either strung together choice passages of the Fathers in *catenae* as a running illustration of the inspired text, or they formed them into a comment upon it. The *Summae Sententiarum* of the same period were works of a similar character, while they also opened the way to the intellectual exercises of the scholastic period; for they were lessons or instructions arranged according to a scheme or system of doctrine, though they were still extracted from the works of the Fathers, and though the matter of those works suggested the divisions or details of the system (*Mission of St Benedict*, § 11; reprint, p. 76).[2]

The devotional poring over the text of Holy Writ; the reading of the commentaries of the Latin Fathers thereon, and their other writings; the working up into fresh commentaries extracts from these sources, and the formation of collections of passages bearing on Christian doctrine and practice; the reading of the Acts of the Martyrs and of the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert and of the holy bishops and monks of

[1] 'Poetica figmenta vobis adeo placent ut in eis studeatis et eadem lectitetis, et doceatis etiam in illis horis quas S. Benedictus sacrae lectioni et operi manuum designavit. Libros gentilium legere solemus, ut,' etc. (Martène, *Thesaurus novus Anecdotorum*, V, 1573).

[2] The two entire passages wherein Newman treats of the intellectual side of Benedictine life are well worth reading; they are: §§ 10, 11, 12 of the *Mission of St Benedict* (reprint, pp. 70-92); and the whole of the second essay, *The Benedictine Centuries*, re-named by Newman himself *The Benedictine Schools*.

succeeding generations; the laborious and patient transcriptio of the manuscripts of all these classes of books and of th classical authors of ancient Rome: these and the like wer the intellectual work of the crowds of monks who people the monasteries during the Benedictine centuries, to whic they devoted the greater part of the hours not spent in churc All this no doubt tended to produce a type of quiet sob learning of a restricted kind; but so far we have met nothin that answers to the ideas conjured up by the words 'Benedi tine Studies,' nothing that can claim the name of erudition critical scholarship.

Venerable Bede stands out as the first Benedictine studer and scholar, the type for all time, 'in his person and h writings as truly the pattern of a Benedictine as is St Thom of a Dominican.'[1] He was first and foremost a Biblic scholar, studying the text of Scripture not only devotional but critically in Latin and Greek, translating it into Angl Saxon, working at the commentaries of the great Lat Fathers, writing commentaries of his own, and makir homilies on the sacred text. In all this a high level of tr scholarship is reached. His historical works are the be known; though not critical in the full sense in which th modern historian is expected to be critical, they possess mar of the highest qualities of the best historical work, especial in the care and trouble taken to obtain the best sources of i formation. He has won from Theodore Mommsen the follo ing encomium: 'He calls himself a "verax historicus," ar he has a right to the title; all who have followed in his tra will testify that few writers have treated matters of fact wi such, and often with such laborious, accuracy.'[2] There is al a whole series of works of his on points of technical schola ship, of science, of archaeology, of chronology, of music ar metre and grammar. In range of subjects and in manner ar temper of treatment, as in character and outlook on life, Bede was the forerunner, the archetype, of the succession Benedictine scholars who, like himself, 'amidst the observan

[1] Newman, *Mission of St Benedict*, § 12; reprint, p. 89.

[2] *Neues Archiv*, 1892, p. 389. I owe this reference to a remarkable arti on St Wilfrid, by Mr R. L. Poole, in *English Historical Review*, Jan. 1919.

of regular discipline and the daily care of singing in the church, always took delight in learning, teaching, and writing.' [1]

Benedictine history has not produced many Bedes; the Benedictine scholars who followed him in the Middle Ages were not his equals. And it has to be recognised that such Benedictine scholars have been at all times singular—one here, one there; the idea of a universally learned Benedictine body is a myth, due to its partial, though very brilliant, realisation among the Maurists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At no time have the general mass of Benedictines been learned. But they have tended to produce at all times individuals re-incarnating the type of Ven. Bede. And when monks of this type do appear they are recognised as no chance product, no extraneous growth or grafting; but the natural fruits of certain elements of Benedictine life and the character and temper of mind it fosters.

This is the place to touch on the 'Contestation' on monastic studies that made such a stir in France at the end of the seventeenth century. The episode is sketched by Newman,[2] by Maitland,[3] and by de Broglie;[4] and the story has been told at full length by Abbé Didio.[5] In the *Devoirs de la Vie monastique* (1683) de Rancé, the celebrated reformer and abbot of la Trappe, laid down most stringent principles, among other things as to the studies and range of reading lawful for monks, limiting them to the Bible and the strictly ascetical and devotional treatises of Fathers and spiritual writers. In 1685 he replied in a volume of *Éclaircissemens* to various criticisms his book had called forth. The position and reputation of the abbot of la Trappe was such that the Maurists, to whose learned labours the book seemed to be a challenge, deemed it necessary to make a reply. The task was laid on Mabillon, and in 1691 he produced his *Traité des Études monastiques*. A *Réponse* by de Rancé promptly followed, wherein it was maintained that 'science can be nothing else than injurious to monks, ruining their piety, simplicity, and purity'; that 'where studies flourish they know neither rule

[1] *Hist. Eccl.*, autobiographical note at end.
[2] *Mission of St Benedict*, § 11; reprint, p. 80.
[3] *Dark Ages*, Essay X. [4] *Mabillon*, c. viii.
[5] *La Querelle de Mabillon et de l'Abbé de Rancé*, 1892.

nor regularity nor discipline nor edification'; that 'the spirit of prayer is extinguished by science'; etc. This produced a year later, 1692, *Réflexions* by Mabillon, and here the matter ended, so far as the two protagonists were concerned.[1] The sequel is worthy of record. A few months after the Contestation Mabillon went to visit de Rancé at la Trappe. On de Rancé saying he hoped Mabillon had not been pained at what he had written against him, the two great men embraced, and any bitterness there might have been passed quite away. A few days later de Rancé wrote of Mabillon: 'Il est certain qu'on ne le peut trop estimer, voyant comme quoi il joint ensemble une humilité profonde avec une grande érudition'; —in other words, Mabillon himself was the best answer to de Rancé's contention.

The *Traité* is much more than an historical justification of monastic studies, claiming for Benedictines the free cultivation of the intellect and a practically unlimited range of study; it is a treatise on higher ecclesiastical studies, laying down principles and methods of work, still valuable for all ecclesiastics, and not for monks only, who are called to give themselves up to the pursuit of such studies in any of their branches.[2] It is just forty years since I read these two works of Mabillon, and the impression they made on me as a piece of constructive historical criticism still lives.

Mabillon's name calls up the Maurists, a probably unique phenomenon not only in monastic history, but in the whole history of literature and erudition—the realisation of a large and permanent corporation of learned men working in common through successive generations.[3]

The wave of reform among Benedictines that began to flow early in the fifteenth century reached France last of the great countries of western Europe. There were among the Benedictines of France certain efforts at reform, restricted and ineffectual, during the sixteenth century; but it was not until the first years of the seventeenth that any such movement

[1] There was a regrettable aftermath among the partisans of either side.

[2] An analysis is given by Dom Besse, *Moine Bénédictin*, c. ix.

[3] In saying this I do not forget the Bollandists, the only body that can come into comparison with the Maurists; but the Society of Bollandists has at no time embraced more than half a dozen members, recruited from the Belgian Province of Jesuits.

with real life in it, was initiated. This was among the monasteries of Lorraine, and it issued in the congregation of St Vanne (1604). Some French houses adopted the reform and joined the congregation; but Lorraine being still independent of the French crown, a congregation of France on the same lines was formed, 1621; this was the congregation of St Maur, which soon came to embrace nearly all the French Benedictine houses not of the Cluny circle.

The character of the congregation of St Maur as known to history was in its origin a conception of the great Richelieu, who found in its beginnings and its superior general the material needed for the realisation of one of his grand ideas, a strong congregation of the Benedictines of France, 'which might profit the State also; so that these monks, living in the peace of the cloister, and remote from the great currents alike of public life and ecclesiastical activities, should still contribute to the greatness, the honour, the name, and the fame of France.'[1] Accordingly, the rapidity with which nearly all the Black Monk monasteries of France fell into the Maurist congregation within about twenty years, so that by the middle of the century it numbered over a hundred and eighty houses, was due mainly to the influence and the backing of Richelieu. The man who entered into Richelieu's mind and gave effect to his ideas was Dom Gregory Tarisse, the superior general, 1630-48. 'During the eighteen years of his government the whole work of constituting the Maurist congregation, of forming its spirit, of settling the line and determining the character of its future activities, was achieved.'[2]

Surprise is often expressed at the number of exceptionally able men who all at once, about the year 1660, appeared in the ranks of the Maurists, so as to enable them to undertake at the same time and to carry out so many vast works of erudition of permanent value. The reason is not far to seek. Thirty years before, in the days of Dom Gregory Tarisse, the Maurist superiors had determined that their congregation should, for the service of the Church, undertake several great works, chiefly critical and historical, especially new editions of the Fathers and a history of the Order. For thirty years the

[1] Edmund Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, 'Richelieu and the Maurists,' p. 471
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 472.

work of preparation had been silently going on, young monk of promise being specially trained in habits of research an of organised work, and the foundations being laid deep an solid. As yet but little had been produced, for they aimed a forming not authors but a school.

It must be remembered, too, that the Maurist superior had great resources to draw from. Of their hundred an eighty monasteries many no doubt were small, but man were large; and so low an average as twelve would give a any time a total of two thousand monks in the congregation; not less than seven to eight thousand in all during the centur and a half of the congregation's existence. De Lama's biblic graphy of the Maurists contains some two hundred and twent names of writers, quite half being authors of works of ascet cism and piety, or else of controversy. The great names assoc ated with the monumental works of the Maurists as editor compilers, or authors, number hardly fifty.[2] But behind mo of these works were a number of unnamed collaborators. A different monasteries would groups of monks be told off to d the spade work for the principal editor, the one responsible f the final product that was given to the world. In this wa were collated the MSS of Augustine and Chrysostom and th other Fathers; in this way was prepared the wonderful Inde to St Augustine, a masterpiece of indexing; in this way wer scanned by careful eyes the writings of the Latin Father and their Biblical citations and allusions picked out ar brought together and sorted for Sabatier's pre-Vulgate Lat Bible; in this way were the materials amassed for such worl as *Gallia Christiana.* The secret of the Maurist output wa that it was corporate work, effected by the collaboration armies of silent unknown workers. And their work went o to the world, much of it bearing no name, even of the editc only the inscription 'labore et studio monachorum S. Benedic Congregationis S. Mauri,'—a description truly representir the facts, for the work was such as could be achieved by r one man. Such anonymous lifework is peculiarly consona with the idea of the monastic state.

[1] In 1768 there were 1917 monks in 191 houses (Lecestre, *Abbayes et Couvc d'hommes en France en* 1768, p. 19, 1902).

[2] See table in my article, 'Maurists' (*Encyc. Brit.*).

But even taking into count all these workers behind the scenes, the monks given up to the labour of erudition can have been at any time but a small percentage even of the Maurists. From their two thousand monks the superiors were always able to bring together in their two Paris literary workshops of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the Blancs-Manteaux communities at most times numbering about fifty, composed of highly-trained scholars and untiring workers in many fields of erudition. This is a case in which departure from fundamental Benedictine principle secured good results; the Maurists professed their subjects not for particular houses but for the congregation, and so had no difficulty in placing each monk where his services would be of greatest use to the common works of the congregation.

A history of the Maurists is a great desideratum: one, that is, not merely of the learned side, for this has been done by Dom Tassin in his *Histoire littéraire de la Congrégation de S. Maur* (1770); but of the congregation and its life and work as a whole, educational and other, with a discriminating estimate of its religious influence on the ecclesiastical and social life of France. It is strange that a theme so attractive has not found an historian. The reason is probably to be found in the prodigious mass of material that would have to be dealt with; and also in the fact that such a work would have to plough right across the theological and ecclesiastical controversies that distracted the French Church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Be this as it may, certain it is that the story would reveal a succession of personalities of singular religious charm, of conspicuous intellectual power, and of persevering laborious achievement.

As a sample of what such a history might contain, I will reproduce the account I gave, in a sketch of Mabillon many years ago, of the controversy occasioned by the edition of St Augustine, this being one of the most important and instructive episodes in Maurist history.[1]

The Louvain edition of St Augustine (1577) was based almost entirely on manuscripts of the Low Countries, and

[1] *Downside Review*, 1893. The materials were printed by Dr Kukula in his brochures *Die Mauriner Ausgabe des Augustinus* (Vienna 1890-98). Ingold has told the story at length, *Histoire de l'édition Ben. de St. Aug.*, 1903.

Pope Sixtus V had desired and actually set on foot another edition; but a century had passed and this project was never realised. When it became known that the Maurists had in hand critical editions of a number of the Fathers, they were urged to undertake St Augustine. The great work was decided upon at a conference of the chief superiors and learned men of the congregation, though not without a warning voice from some present that in the then excited state of the theological world in France an edition of St Augustine on the same lines as the others would probably expose the congregation to charges of Jansenism. This was in 1670; the first volume appeared in 1679, the tenth in 1690, the eleventh and last not until 1700; and during these twenty years a vigorous attack upon the edition was kept up by theologians of the school commonly, though not quite correctly, called Molinist. Many of the points of attack on the edition simply amaze us now. Some of the manuscripts relied on for readings came from England and Geneva; these, though dating from a period long before the Reformation, were, on account of their present owners, stigmatised as 'heretical codices.' Corbie manuscripts of the seventh to the tenth centuries were pronounced by the *a priori* critics to have been written by a monk who was infected with the errors of Wyclif, and had tampered with the text in favour of his heresy. Some went so far as to maintain that early printed editions are of more authority than those based on a comparison and criticism of manuscripts. The only reasons for such assertions were that the manuscripts in question favoured readings distasteful to these critics. So much for textual criticism; the introductions and notes were, however, the chief object of attack. It was pointed out that there was no formal refutation or disavowal of Jansenism, and the notes were said to give, and of set purpose, a Jansenistic turn to several passages: thus one note stated that a reading supposed in some quarters to countenance Jansenistic ideas, was supported by a greater number of good manuscripts than the current one; another by a reference to a parallel passage, weakened the probative force of a text of the Father commonly used as an argument in support of a certain theological thesis; and so on.

For a long time the Maurists took no notice of these

attacks; but in 1698 some very violent and injurious anonymous tracts against the edition were published; these provoked replies, and soon an active pamphlet war was raging. The Maurists took the case to Rome, calling for the condemnation of the pamphlets attacking them; and Montfaucon was kept there to watch the case, answer difficulties, and write memorials. He published, with the approval of the Master of the Sacred Palace, a Vindication which made a great impression; and in the beginning of July 1699 he, together with the procurator of the congregation, Dom Delaparre, personally presented a copy to the Pope, Innocent XII. A few days later Delaparre wrote to Mabillon that the Pope had appeared very indignant at their adversaries' conduct, and had spoken of them as disturbers of the peace of the Church. Emboldened by this, Delaparre put in for examination at the Congregation of the Inquisition the ten volumes of St Augustine already published, and the task of examining both them and the pamphlets was entrusted to a board of theologians with a Carmelite at their head.

To return to France; the Maurist superiors considered it necessary that to the eleventh and last volume of St Augustine should be prefixed a General Preface to the whole edition, containing a defence or explanation of the points attacked and an official manifesto of the theological position of the congregation. Bossuet and other friends strongly urged this course. The object of the Preface should be the one laid down by Bossuet, namely, to set forth St Augustine's doctrine as 'également opposée à Jansenius et à Molina.' That it should be well done was of the utmost importance for the repute and well-being of the congregation, and the task called for handling at once delicate and firm. Mabillon was the man to whom was entrusted the vindication of the theological good name of his brethren, so far as putting into form the materials doubtless supplied to him by others. He set to work on August 13th, 1699, and by the 22nd he had completed his first draft, a marvellous achievement in so short a time for one who was not a theologian by profession. This draft was submitted to critics of various schools, among others to Duguet, a Port Royalist of a moderate type. After a review of the criticisms received it was re-written and put

into Bossuet's hands. This version is given by Kukula. It contains an elaborate answer to the various strictures made on the edition, and lays down canons for interpreting St Augustine's language on Grace. It is clear that, to speak in general, the Maurists held views on the questions connected with Grace akin to those elaborated out of St Augustine's writing by Cardinal Noris and after him by Fr Berti, and that their account of St Augustine's teaching would have been much the same as the one drawn out by the late Dom Odilo Rottmanner of Munich.[1]

Bossuet kept the manuscript for a considerable time, whilst the pamphlet war was ever waxing hotter and hotter; until at last in November the archbishop of Paris summoned to his presence the Maurist superior general and the Jesuit provincial, and communicated to them a royal mandate strictly ordering them in the King's name to forbid their subjects to say or write anything more in the controversy, and to suppress all that had been written on either side. After consultation with influential friends the Benedictines came to the conclusion that the proposed 'Praefatio Generalis' would not fall under the King's prohibition; so Bossuet returned it to Mabillon with a number of corrections and suggestions. Mabillon had never liked the task, which certainly was neither congenial nor on the lines of his ordinary work; but there was no help for it: the Preface had to be revised in the light of Bossuet's suggestions. 'Voilà donc le pauvre D. Mabillon,' says Dom Thuillier, 'recloué pour la 3e fois sur sa Préface. Jamais ouvrage ne lui fit plus de peine. Il en pleuroit de tristesse et de dépit. Il sentit enfin qu'il écrivoit invitâ Minervâ. . . . Nouvelles sueurs pour D. Mabillon, nouveaux dégoûts.'

While Mabillon was writing this third redaction of his Preface the examination of the edition and of the pamphlets attacking it was going on at the Inquisition at Rome. On June 7th, 1700, a decree was published condemning and prohibiting the four chief pamphlets against the Maurists. Their triumph was complete, and their opponents felt it. Fénelon, a Molinist, though he thought that the Benedictines 'avaient beaucoup péché, et non véniellement,' in their St Augustine,

[1] *Der Augustinismus: eine dogmengeschichtliche Studie* (München 1892). Reprinted in posthumous collection of articles, *Geistesfrüchte*, 1908.

for all that deplored that the attack had ever been made. 'Oh! si jamais on n'avait soulevé cette controverse qui procure un triomphe visible aux éditeurs.' The decree of the Inquisition simplified Mabillon's work, for he could now cut out as unnecessary much of the merely contentious part of the Preface, and the final version, barely one-third of the original, was soon ready for Bossuet and the other bishops who were the advisers of the Maurists in the matter. They made a few further alterations and it was printed forthwith, and in September 1700 the long-expected eleventh volume was presented to the King.

But no sooner was his Preface launched than poor Mabillon, now in his seventieth year, fairly ran away—fled out of Paris to Normandy, to be out of reach of the storm of criticisms he feared it would call forth. Early in October he wrote to Duguet, to inquire the state of opinion in Paris. The answer was not reassuring. Extreme men on both sides attacked it vehemently; and to us looking back this fact will probably appear no mean praise. The Jansenists were very wroth, and Quesnel, their leader, formulated twelve points wherein he considered it was opposed to 'the true teaching of St Augustine' (i.e. to the Jansenist theology). On the other side Fénelon was equally displeased, so much so that he issued a letter to his clergy wherein he stigmatises the Preface as 'sophistique, illusoire et envénimée,' and goes over the grounds of his strong objection to the whole edition. It is not a little curious to find that he reproduces the very points of attack of the pamphlets that had been condemned at Rome. The supreme tribunal had carefully gone into the case; the edition had not been censured, and the writings of its opponents had been condemned; and to find Fénelon again bringing up the charges that had been put out of court, is but one instance out of many that might be cited from the times to show how far the party-spirit engendered by the theological controversies then raging might make an excellent man lose his balance of mind; while the whole story shows, too, how the Holy See discerned the truth amidst all the dust of controversy, and did not allow itself to be carried away from the golden mean between the contending parties. It gave further marked though indirect approvals to the edition of St Augustine, for

in 1701, while the affair was fresh in all men's minds, Pope Clement XI sent the expression of his paternal love to the whole congregation, 'and especially to those who have been and are engaged in editing the works of the Fathers'; and in 1706 he sent the superior general twenty-six gold medals to be distributed among those who had taken the chief part in the various editions so far brought out. Three times during the next thirty years the attack on the edition was renewed, to be promptly suppressed in each case by the authority of the Holy See.

This gives an idea of the atmosphere in which the Maurists did their work, and of the difficulties they encountered. What is spoken of as the modern school of historical criticism and erudition was created in France in the seventeenth century, and the Maurists played a principal part in its creation. Saint-Germain-des-Prés became the centre of the learned world, not only of France, but of all Europe, and continued such for more than a century. A charming picture of St Germain and its denizens, and their relations with the learned men of all countries, is drawn by Prince Emmanuel de Broglie in the twin works, each in two volumes, *Mabillon* (1888) and *Montfaucon* (1891). The Maurists' tastes and studies were shared by some members of other religious orders in Paris and by some secular priests and laymen; and on Sunday afternoons a number of these learned men would attend vespers at the abbey and then adjourn to a room in the monastery to exchange news and views with the monks on all matters relating to ecclesiastical or medieval learning, antiquities and art. I cannot do more than refer to Broglie's delightful picture of these reunions, which formed a neutral ground where Jesuit and Port Royalist, Ultramontane and Gallican met freely—a veritable oasis in the heated desert of French seventeenth-century ecclesiastical politics. Probably in the domain of pure erudition the like of these Sunday afternoon meetings at Saint-Germain-des-Prés has never been seen, where so many men, the authors of works still fundamental in so many branches of learning, met informally to discuss difficulties, to exchange ideas, and mutually to help one another. There used to be seen Du Cange, Baluze, Cotelier, Menestrier, Renaudot, Fleury, Tillemont, Pagi, Valois—to name only a few of the best known.

It is difficult to characterise or appraise, or even to afford the materials for any just estimate of the actual Maurist output during the century and a half of their labours. The list of principal Maurist works already spoken of (*Encyc. Brit.*, art. 'Maurists') contains 200 folio volumes and many of lesser size. And what was produced was but a portion of what was planned and in active course of preparation. At the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris are hundreds of volumes of the MS collections of materials left unused by the Maurists when the Revolution cut short their work, from which the learned societies of France, as the Institut, the Académie des Inscriptions and the École des Chartes, have quarried vast quantities of material. Thus there are 800 volumes of materials for the histories of the Provinces of France; 236 for a *Trésor généalogique;* 31 for the history of the Crusades; 90 for various Benedictine antiquities; the materials for 7 more folio volumes of *Concilia Galliae*, whereof Vol. I was published only in 1789: and much more.[1] Nor was this all. In the last years at the request of the civil power they undertook the vast scheme of a *Trésor des Chartes*, or copies of every important ancient document in France.[2]

As I wrote in the aforesaid article: 'When these figures are considered, and when one contemplates the vastness of the works in progress during any decade of the century 1680-1780; and still more, when not only the quantity but the quality of the work, and the abiding value of most of it is realised, it will be recognised that the output was prodigious and unique in the history of letters, as coming from a single society. The qualities that have made Maurist work proverbial for sound learning are its fine critical tact and its thoroughness.'

It is these qualities that give their work its most remarkable feature, namely, its permanent character. The greater part of it has not yet been superseded. Modern methods of editing are superior in scientific plan and technique. But by no means always is modern editing, for all its science, better than the Maurist. It was the deliberate verdict which the scholar whom I look on as the finest critic of recent work in editing,

[1] See Appendix to de Lama's Maurist *Bibliothèque* (1882), and de Lisle's *Cabinet*, 'Fonds Saint-Germain-des-Prés.'

[2] Bishop, *op. cit.* p. 460.

the late Prof. Julicher of Marburg, passed[1] on volume after volume of the works of Augustine in the Vienna Corpus, that the Maurist edition is still the best.

Next to the editions of the Fathers their principal work was the opening up of the history of the early Middle Ages by the publication and utilisation of the records, till then wholly neglected. It is now recognised on all hands that the action of the Church in those dark ages that lay between the downfall of the ancient civilisation and the rise of the new, forms one of her fairest titles to the veneration and gratitude of mankind. But in the seventeenth century all this was suspected or felt by only a very few; to the literary world of the day this point of view was quite out of the range of vision and almost of conception. True, the formal history of the Church engaged attention, and the lives of the Saints; but medieval studies as such and for their own sake were universally despised. And it was Mabillon and his friends who had the courage and the insight and the faith to devote themselves to a kind of work neglected and looked down upon by the predominant taste and appreciation of their age, in the belief, so fully verified, that the undercurrents of the Church's influence and her social action on the everyday life of the peoples she was civilising, would persuasively show forth her heavenly mission to teach and guide mankind.

It is necessary to touch, however briefly, on the question, What was the effect of the pursuit of study and learning on the Maurists as monks? There is a widely accepted vague idea that, however conspicuous was the fidelity to their monastic state in the giants of the first generation—the Mabillons, Montfaucons, Martènes,[2]—during the eighteenth century intellectual interests tended ever more and more to encroach on the religious side of the life, so that Saint-Germain-des-Prés ended as an academy of érudits rather than a community of monks. Abbot Delatte seems to voice such ideas.[3] The question in short is, Was de Rancé substantially right?

[1] In *Theologische Literaturzeitung*.

[2] On Mabillon see my article, *Downside Review*, 1893. 'He in such way devoted himself to study that he never absented himself from the least conventual duty' (Massuet, who lived at St Germain with Mabillon).

[3] *Commentaire*, p. 353.

It is not denied that at the middle of the century grave disorders existed in the congregation, causing disorganisation and demoralisation. Any attempt to particularise or characterise these evils, which were many, and to trace them to their sources, however instructive it would be, would take up more space than is here available, and would be outside our present scope. All that concerns us is the one point: Whether, and how far, the studies were a contributing cause. And here it is possible to signalise certain facts that seem to afford sufficient basis for a just judgement.

Quite recently a book has been published on the last days of the other great French Benedictine congregation, the Lorraine congregation of St Vanne.[1] It appears clearly that all the evils that existed in St Maur existed also, and even in greatly accentuated form, in St Vanne. But in spite of the great names of Calmet and Ceillier, there were no organised studies, no special cultivation of intellectual pursuits, in St Vanne.[2] This affords presumptive evidence that the disorders in St Maur were due, not to their studies, but to general causes affecting the French Church and French society at large in the times of Louis XV. This presumption is borne out by the facts of the closing days of the congregations.[3] In the year 1790 the National Assembly called on all the religious of France to say individually whether they desired to persevere in their religious life, or to avail themselves of the facilities offered them by the State of withdrawing from it.

Of the congregation of St Maur at large more than half elected to withdraw from community life; in 39 houses of St Vanne, out of 437 monks, 144 desired to persevere in monastic life, 229 elected to abandon it, and 64 were undecided.[4] But

[1] J. E. Godefroy, *Les Bénédictins de Saint-Vanne et la Révolution* (Paris 1918). See notice in 'Times Literary Supplement,' Feb. 13th, 1919.

[2] See Bishop, *op. cit.* p. 472; also Godefroy, pp. 42-6.

[3] What follows is derived from the work of Abbé J. B. Vanel, *Les Bénédictins de Saint-Maur à Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (Paris 1896). It is the official necrology of the monks who died there, edited with valuable Introduction, Notes, and Appendices; in all one of the most important contributions to Maurist history.

[4] Vanel, p. 369; Godefroy, p. 116. Benedictines did not come out worse than others: of the total number of men belonging to the various religious orders in Paris, 385 elected to remain, 451 to withdraw, and 85 did not answer. Both above-named writers emphasise the fact that the withdrawals by no means all, or nearly all, spelled apostasy. Many recognised that the religious life had been made impossible, and sought refuges elsewhere, often as parochial clergy. Still, the apostasies were numerous.

at St Germain, the centre of Maurist intellectual life and organised study, out of the 47 monks 37 desired to be faithful to their monastic state. It is of interest to inspect the names.[1] All of those known to have been engaged on the great Maurist works, such as Berthereau and Villevielle, and seven or eight more, were among the faithful. It is the same when we turn to the other great Paris house, the Blancs-Manteaux; the community at the end numbered only twelve; half elected to persevere in the monastic life and migrated to St Germain; among them were all those whose names are associated with the great works of erudition, Clément (*L'Art de vérifier les dates*), Haudiquier and Brial (continuators of Bouquet's *Historiens des Gaules et de la France*), Labbat (*Concilia Galliae*).

Thus it appears that in the congregation of St Vanne, in which studies did not in any particular way enter into the life of the congregation, the religious condition and the final defections were notably more deplorable than in the congregation of St Maur. And in St Maur itself, the defections were proportionately much more numerous in the general body not engaged on the great learned undertakings, than at St Germain, the centre and principal workshop of the intellectual activities of the congregation. And the groups of literary workers in the two Paris houses stand out as faithful to a man.

These are the facts. The induction to be drawn from them would seem to be that the studies of the Maurists made, not for the weakening, but for the strengthening of religious spirit in those who pursued them.[2]

[1] Vanel, pp. 368-78.

[2] The idea that monastic spirit had evaporated under the influence of intellectual work is due largely to a petition made in 1765 by the community of Saint-Germain-des-Prés for certain mitigations of the observance of the congregation. This has usually been characterised as a petition for secularisation. Dom Anger in the *Revue Mabillon*, iv, 1908, prints the chief documents of the episode. His verdict is that it was nothing of the sort, but rather a courageous effort to meet some of the crying evils of the congregation. The aim was to substitute for the original reformed observance, no longer observed by the majority, a régime that might be kept by all. It is my belief that Dom Anger has put the thing in its true perspective. Of all the proposals that which caused the greatest outcry was one to change the habit; this was represented as a desire to abandon the monastic habit and assume a secular dress. It was nothing of the kind. The proposal was to revert to the habit worn by Benedictines in France before the reform. What that was may be seen in Helyot (*Ordres religieux*, v, 200, 208),

The end was not without its glories. The last superior general, Dom Ambroise Chevreux, perished in the massacre of priests at the Carmes; 40 of his brethren died on the scaffold, and others suffered imprisonments.[1]

Though their history was marred and their work impeded by the controversies that afflicted the French Church—Jansenism, Gallican liberties, lax moral theology; still, in regard to their work we can acquiesce in Cardinal Gasquet's judgement when he calls it 'one of the greatest and purest literary and religious glories of modern times.'[2]

NOTE.—A friend tells me I should add a bibliographical note, indicating the great Maurist workers and their principal works. The pioneers of their learned work were Ménard and d'Achery.

MÉNARD (*d.* 1644): the editio princeps of the Ep. of Barnabas; Concordia Regularum (see above, p. 181); Gregorian Sacramentary (an unfortunate venture, see Bishop, *Liturg. Hist.*, Index, 'Ménard').

D'ACHERY (*d.* 1685), Mabillon's master: edited Lanfranc; initiated the Acta of the Benedictine Saints carried through by Mabillon; edited Spicilegium in 13 vols., the first great collection of miscellaneous documents.

MABILLON (*d.* 1707): edited Bernard; Acta of Benedictine Saints (with d'Achery and Ruinart, the Prefaces being Mabillon's); Benedictine Annals to 1157; Diplomatica, with Supplement. Many minor works of great value. In all 20 folio vols., and as many of lesser size.

MONTFAUCON (*d.* 1741, in his 87th year): the most prolific of the Maurists, 45 folio vols. appearing under his direction: edited Athanasius (with Loppin) and Chrysostom; Origen's Hexapla; collection of works of Greek Fathers; Greek Paleography; Monuments of the French Monarchy (medieval antiquities); and the only Maurist work on classical antiquity, L'Antiquité expliquée in 15 folios.

Other great Maurist editors were:

DU FRISCHE (*d.* 1693): Ambrose.

RUINART (*d.* 1709): Acta Martyrum; Gregory of Tours; collaborated with Mabillon in Acta of Ben. SS.

both 'habit de maison' and 'habit de ville'; the former is definitely monastic, with hood; the latter is a dignified and thoroughly ecclesiastical dress, in favour of which they might have appealed, indeed, did appeal, to Cassian (see passage cited above, p. 152).

[1] St Vanne, too, had its heroes and its martyrs (Godefroy, p. 148).

[2] *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, ii. 521.

MASSUET (*d.* 1716): Irenaeus.

MARTIANAY (*d.* 1717): Jerome.

COUSTANT (*d.* 1721): Hilary; Epp. Rom. Pont.; Augustine (along with Delfau, Blampin, and Guesnié).

SAINTE-MARTHE (*d.* 1725): Gregory the Great; Gallia Christiana, vols. 1-3 (carried on by others to the end).

DE LA RUE (*d.* 1739): Origen.

MARAN (*d.* 1762): Justin; Cyril Hieros. (with Touttée); Basil (with Garnier); Cyprian (with Baluze, not Maurist); Gregory Naz (with Clémencet).

Of other works and workers may be mentioned:

SABATIER (*d.* 1742): pre-Vulgate Latin Bible.

MARTÈNE (*d.* 1739) and DURAND (*d.* 1773): two immense collections of medieval documents in 14 folio vols.

Martène produced also the standard work on the Ancient Rites of the Church, and Commentary on St Benedict's Rule (above, p. 182).

RIVET (*d.* 1749): Histoire littéraire de la France (continued by Clémencet, Clément, and others).

BOUQUET (*d.* 1754): Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France (continued by Haudiquier, Clément, Brial, and others)

DANTINE (*d.* 1746) and CARPENTIER (*d.* 1767): new edition of Du Cange's Glossarium.

Dantine, Durand, Clémencet: L'Art de vérifier les dates.

CLÉMENT (*d.* 1793): two new editions of same work.

TOUSTAIN (*d.* 1754) and TASSIN (*d.* 1777): Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique.

The Histories of five of the Provinces of France were published in 21 folio vols.

Fuller information will be found in Table attached to art 'Maurists' in *Encyc. Brit.* The authorities for Maurist bibliography are Tassin's *Histoire littéraire* and de Lama's *Bibliothèque.*

## CHAPTER XXI

### SKETCH OF BENEDICTINE HISTORY

A SKETCH, however slight, of the course of Benedictine history, just to indicate in their sequence the great landmarks, seems a necessary complement to what has gone before. There is not in any language a general history of the Benedictines in two or three volumes. The subject is not one of overwhelming difficulty, though it does call for understanding and for very definite historical gifts. The only sketch of Benedictine history from first to last, and with good bibliography, is that given in Dr Max Heimbucher's *Orden und Kongregationen der kath. Kirche*, 2nd ed., 1907, vol. i. pp. 205-476. It is a serviceable piece of work, recording facts and names. But it is in no sense a Benedictine history.

Benedictine history falls into five epochs:

I. From St Benedict to St Benedict of Aniane: 500-800. The period of propagation of the institute.

II. From St Benedict of Aniane to the Fourth Lateran Council: 800-1215. The period of Cluny dominance.

III. From the Fourth Lateran Council to the Council of Constance: 1215-1418. The feudal period.

IV. From the Council of Constance to the French Revolution: 1418-1800. The period of congregations.

V. From the French Revolution to the Great War: 1800-1914. The period of reconstruction.

### EPOCH I (500-800)

#### *St Benedict to St Benedict of Aniane*

St Benedict's dates are (approximately): 480 born; 500 left Rome and repaired to Subiaco; 525 migrated to Monte Cassino; 545 died. After going to Monte Cassino the only monastery that there is record of his founding was one at

Terracina (Dialogues, ii, 22). Thus if the legends of S Placid and St Maur be rejected,[1] the only Benedictine mona teries of which there is authentic information as existing durir St Benedict's lifetime are Subiaco,[2] Monte Cassino, Terracin

Of Simplicius, the third abbot of Monte Cassino, certa verses attached to early copies of the Rule say: 'Magist latens opus propagavit in omnes.' This has been taken indicating that it was during his abbacy that the spread of t Rule to wider circles began. But the determining event the propagation of St Benedict's institute, and the occasion the rôle it has played in European history, was the destructi of Monte Cassino by the Lombards in 581 (589), and t migration of the monks to Rome, where they were establish in a monastery at the Lateran basilica, being thus broug directly under the eyes of the popes. The one to whc must principally be credited the propagation of Benedicti monachism is St Gregory the Great. Perhaps before the co ing of the Cassinese community to Rome, but at any ra soon after, he made St Benedict's the rule followed in his o monastery of St Andrew on the Coelian Hill, and probat also in the six he had founded on his Sicilian estates; and I Dudden is undoubtedly right in saying that his monas policy consisted in 'strengthening and developing the syst established by Benedict and enforcing the prescriptions the Benedictine Rule' (*Gregory the Great*, ii, 173). It is interest to see that a thoroughly modern historian like I Grützmacher, after going carefully through the Maurist c in support of the Benedictinism of St Gregory and St Aug tine, accepts the fact as proven.[3]

[1] Any tradition rejected by Dom L'Huillier may safely be rejected; bu rejects the Acta of St Placid and St Maur, the former absolutely, the la practically. I am unable to follow him in the lines of argumentation whe he seeks to maintain the subtantials of the two stories—the martyrdom o Placid and St Maur's mission to Gaul (*Le Patriarche S. Benoit*, 'Appendi It has to be recognised, I think, that all we know of the two first disciple what St Gregory tells us, and the fact of their cultus in the ninth cent attested by various litanies, one of Subiaco itself, wherein St Placid figure company with SS. Benedict and Maur among the Confessors (Baümer, *Mati* p. 199).

[2] The monastery at Subiaco still subsisted in 600 (*Dialogues*, ii, pref. that its continuous existence since St Benedict's time is established.

[3] *Die Bedeutung*, etc. § 8.

St Augustine and his monks brought the Rule to England, and their monastery of SS. Peter and Paul (later St Augustine's) in Canterbury, established 600, was the first Benedictine monastery outside of Italy of which authentic record exists. And it was in England that the first great Benedictine developments took place. This was not only in Kent, where the original foundation received great impetus from Archbishop Theodore, himself a Greek, and Abbot Adrian sent with him by the pope, an African monk clearly a Benedictine trained no doubt in Rome (669); but also in the northern parts of the country, where it was introduced in the second half of the seventh century, by Wilfrid at Ripon and by Benet Biscop at Wearmouth and Jarrow, both having learned the practice of the Benedictine Rule and life not only in Kent, but also during their travels abroad, at Rome and elsewhere. By 700 the Benedictine Rule was followed universally throughout the Saxon parts of England, but not yet in the British and Celtic parts.

If the Life of St Maur be discarded, the first trace of the Rule in Gaul or Frankland is about 620, when Donatus of Besançon made it the basis of a rule he composed for nuns. Throughout the seventh century there is evidence of its progressive introduction throughout the land, even into the monasteries of the Lerins group, and into the Irish foundations made by St Columbanus and his disciples. In some monasteries two or even three rules, those of Caesarius, Columbanus, and Benedict, were observed together; but everywhere St Benedict's gradually but surely supplanted all others, and by the end of the seventh century it was the rule of all the monasteries of the Frankish kingdoms. In the German lands it was introduced during the eighth century in the monasteries established by St Boniface and the other Benedictine missionaries from England.

After lying a solitude for nearly a century and a half, Monte Cassino was restored early in the eighth century. On the suggestion of Pope Gregory II Petronax of Brescia repaired to Monte Cassino in 717, and finding there a few simple men living a semi-eremitical life, he joined them and became their senior. Recruits came, and among them in 729 the young Saxon Willibald on his return from a pilgrimage

to the Holy Land. He found only a few monks under Petronax, and having passed his youth, from five to twenty, in one of the well-organised monasteries of England, he was dissatisfied with the effort at Benedictine life he saw at Monte Cassino, and threw himself into the work of instructing them in 'the right constitution' of a Benedictine monastery and 'the norm of cenobitic life.' He stayed there for ten years, till sent by the pope to help St Boniface in Germany, holding some of the principal offices of the monastery. Petronax lived for another ten years, and if he left Monte Cassino fully organised in community and in buildings, and started on its course as the principal Benedictine monastery in the world, this it seems is to be attributed to the inspiration of the English Willibald.[1]

I hope it is not national vanity that makes it appear to me that during the later half of the seventh century and the eighth, a predominant place in the Benedictine world was held by the monks of England. Two great Benedictine types were produced in England at this time: the apostles, Wilfrid, Willibrord, and above all Boniface; and the first, and for ever typical, Benedictine scholar, Bede. And an Englishman brought back to Monte Cassino from England that sound monastic tradition that the English monks had themselves received from Monte Cassino through the hands of St Gregory. I do not think it is fancy, for Abbot Tosti seems to have perceived the same truth in a passage wherein he says that 'in England the Benedictine order got blood and nerve from the strong race of the Anglo-Saxons.'[2]

The introduction of the Benedictine Rule into Spain, Scandinavia, and the Slavonic lands belongs to a later date; but, except in Celtic parts, by the year 800 throughout Italy, France, England, Germany, St Benedict's Rule held universal

[1] The story of the restoration of Monte Cassino has been put in its true light by Dom Chapman in *Revue Bénédictine*, 1904. The sources are Paul Warnefrid's History of the Lombards, VI, 40, and Life of Willibald, c. 3 (al. 5). Dom Chapman rightly rejects the statement of Leo of Ostia, the eleventh century chronicler of Monte Cassino, that the restoration was made by a colony from the Lateran monastery: this is quite counter to the sources, and is without doubt due to the natural hankering after continuity. It has to be recognised that Monte Cassino has not got unbroken continuity with St Benedict.

[2] *San Benedetto*, c. x., § 8.

and undivided sway, the very memory of other rules having died out so completely that Charles the Great could ask if there ever had been any other monastic rule.

## EPOCH II (800-1215)

### *St Benedict of Aniane to the Fourth Lateran Council*

At the beginning of this period we meet the figure of Benedict of Aniane, the first Benedictine Reformer, with whom set in the tendency, spoken of in chapter XVIII, to go back upon St Benedict's reconstruction of monastic life. He had even a contempt of St Benedict's Rule as fit only for tiros and weaklings, and his desire was to revert to the severer rules of Basil and Pachomius.[1] His scheme for creating complete identity of observance in all the abbeys of the Frankish Empire has been described already (p. 236). The scheme, only partially successful in his lifetime, expired at his death. 'He did not succeed in changing the ideas of the great religious centres —fortunately,' says Dom Berlière.[2] The famous Capitula of Aachen, or body of regulations which he induced the abbots to adopt at their great meeting of 817, as the basis of the common observance, prove on examination a disappointing document; certainly such provisions were not the touchstone between observance and inobservance in monasteries, much less the test of religious spirit.

Just a century after Benedict of Aniane we meet the great name of Cluny. During the ninth century the monasteries in many parts of Europe—in England, Italy, and along the coasts of France, and also in Central Europe—suffered grievously from the incursions of Danes, Northmen, Huns, Saracens, and others; so that the monastic order was all but exterminated in many regions, and the disorders and evils of the times had wrought their inevitable effects over wide areas. Cluny is in Burgundy, north of Lyons, about half way to Dijon. The monastery was founded in 910, and in less than a century it

[1] So his biographer and admirer, Ardo. This life is prefixed to the *Concordia Regularum* (Migne, P.L. ciii, 351), and is to be found in various collections that are obvious. Edmund Bishop gives a sketch of him and his monastic reform efforts in *Liturgica Historica*, p. 212; cf. also Cardinal Gasquet's *Sketch*, p. xxv, cited p. 236.

[2] *L'Ordre monastique*, p. 115.

became not merely the most important Benedictine monastery in the world, but the chief ecclesiastical centre outside of Rome, the abbot of Cluny being, next to the pope, the most prominent churchman in western Europe. The abbots have already been spoken of (p. 196), and the external organisation of the Cluny system of monasteries (p. 238). But the influence and the observance and spirit of Cluny spread far beyond the circle of houses subject to the rule of its abbot. The Cluniac reform became so completely the fashion that it was adopted in nearly all the principal monasteries of France and the Low Countries, —all the territories west of the Rhine,—in northern Spain to the Ebro, and in some of the greatest abbeys of Italy as far south as Salerno, including those of Rome and even Subiaco and Monte Cassino itself.[1]

In England there were no Cluniac houses before the Conquest. But the monastic movement in the reign of Edgar, carried out by St Dunstan with SS. Ethelwold and Oswald, introduced the same prolongation of the canonical office and the same accretions as were in use at Cluny.[2]

East of the Rhine Cluny ideas were propagated chiefly by St William, abbot of Hirschau during the second half of the eleventh century, whose influence secured their adoption in more than a hundred monasteries throughout Germany, but without the Cluniac organisation, the houses retaining their full autonomy. It is to be noted that many of the great German abbeys, as Fulda, the greatest of all, remained quite outside the Cluny sphere of influence.

Thus from the middle of the tenth century until its supremacy was challenged by the Cistercians early in the twelfth, Cluny reigned supreme in the Benedictine world; and for a long period afterwards, until almost modern times, in Black Monk circles the Cluniac presentation of Benedictine life was in its essential lines the accepted theory on which the life of the monasteries was fashioned.

[1] See Heussi-Mulert, *Atlas zur Kirchengeschichte*, Map vi, C.

[2] This does not imply that the inner life of the English houses was in other things modelled on Cluny, as certainly the external organisation was not. In this matter of the office Cluny only fixed the ideas initiated by Benedict of Aniane, which had been fluid in Benedictine circles for a century. Then the usages of such houses as Cluny and Fleury (where they were introduced *cir.* 940) set the tone for correct Benedictine observance everywhere.

What is to be thought of Cluny? The Cluniac idea of the daily life has been explained above (pp. 295-7), and my own verdict has been passed in the words that it was a transformation of the life designed by St Benedict (p. 298). Dom Berlière's estimate is not very different: 'A tradition was created that the celebration of the office was not merely, as St Benedict intended, the most important thing in the plan of the monastic life, but almost the only occupation of monks, in face of which work might be abandoned. This was to upset the equilibrium so wisely established by the holy Legislator, and it led the order to catastrophe.'[1] Dom Berlière devotes two of his 'conferences' to Cluny; the first to its monastic side and the reform associated with its name; the second to its part in the ecclesiastical world-politics of the time, especially in the great struggle of the Hildebrandine movement. This latter does not concern us.

In spite of the judgement just cited Dom Berlière views Cluny with enthusiasm: it was a great and much-needed and successful reform, the monasteries of the later Carolingian empire having lost their fervour and religious spirit. Other writers, as Dom Besse,[2] speak in the same way of the generality of the monasteries in the time of Benedict of Aniane. For my own part I doubt that we have detailed information as to the life of the particular monasteries either at 800 or at 900 sufficient to justify such generalisations. It is the same story when the Cistercians arose in the twelfth century, and the Friars in the thirteenth, and the Brothers of Common Life in the fifteenth, and in short in the case of all reforms: spiritual religion had evaporated from the face of the earth. While not for a moment questioning the reality and the value of all the numerous renewals and revivals and reforms that are so striking a feature of Benedictine history, we must yet bear in mind that it is a natural trick of panegyrists of reforms and reformers to depict in colours much too black the general state of things when the hero appeared on the scene.[3] I think monastic history written from the standpoint of reforms will be a picture out of perspective. At all times there

[1] *L'Ordre monastique*, p. 115. [2] *Moine Bénédictin*, p. 12.

[3] Paul Sabatier's introductory chapter to the Life of St Francis is an example of this.

has been some monastery, some congregation, some reformer, in the limelight, the salt of the earth: my knowledge of monastic history leads me to the belief that at all times there has been a background of old-fashioned houses in which a very respectable religious life, with good, if not showy, observance and real spiritual religion, was being lived in a quiet way outside of the reform-circle of the hour.

After Cluny, Citeaux. Citeaux was the great Benedictine reform. The keynote was a return to the literal observance of St Benedict's Rule—how literal may be seen from the controversy between St Bernard and Peter the Venerable, the last of the great abbots of Cluny.[1] The Cistercians rejected all mitigations and all developments, and tried to reproduce the life exactly as it had been in St Benedict's time, indeed in various points they went beyond it in austerity and tended to hark back to elements of pre-Benedictine monachism abandoned by St Benedict. Being definitely a recoil from Cluniac elaboration and ritualism, the primitive Cistercian movement was marked by a character of puritanism. Naturally the restoration of manual labour was one of the prominent features, but after a time this passed mostly into the hands of lay brothers, the choir monks tending to become assimilated to the Black Benedictines.[2]

Lesser orders, offshoots from the Benedictine, with the Rule and the same manner of life, which arose during this period, were the Cenobitical branch of the Camaldolese, and the Vallombrosians; and a century later the Silvestrines and Olivetans, all of which orders still exist as small independent bodies. Towards the middle of the eleventh century certain movements independent of Cluny and to some extent reactions against its ways manifested themselves in Black Benedictine circles; the more remarkable of these were Bec in Normandy, which became the centre of a group of eighteen monasteries, and Thiron in Picardy, the centre of a hundred, one being Caldey Abbey.

[1] Reproduced in Maitland, *Dark Ages*, § xxii; also the Dialogue between a Cluniac and a Cistercian, referred to on p. 335.

[2] Dom Berlière's last 'Conference' is devoted to Citeaux (*op. cit.*).

## EPOCH III (1215-1418)

### *The Fourth Lateran Council to the Council of Constance*

The wane of Cluniac and Cistercian influences brings us to the Fourth Council of Lateran. Its legislation for the Black Benedictines has been explained; and also how its provisions were consolidated and enlarged by the Bull 'Summi Magistri,' or 'Benedictina' of Benedict XII, 1336 (pp. 240, 247). This legislation has been epoch-making; for the provincial chapters it established were the nucleus out of which grew the system of congregations on which Black Benedictines are now organised.

Only in England was the scheme consistently carried out, and it went on unchanged to the Dissolution; so that there this period of the history lasted a century longer than on the Continent. On the Continent only intermittent attempts were made to carry out the legislation, but without sustained effort or success.

This was the period during which the great Benedictine houses were fully caught up into the feudal system, the abbots becoming feudal lords with results only too often deplorable. At this time, too, the evil system of 'commendam' reached its greatest magnitude: the system whereby an extern, not a monk, often not an ecclesiastic, was nominated abbot of a monastery by some outside authority, pope or king or lay patron representing the founder of the monastery, to manage the property, administer the temporalities, carry out the feudal obligations, especially the military ones, and, above all, draw the greater part of the revenue of the monastery, only a portion, often inadequate, being assigned for the maintenance of the community, and the upkeep of the monastic buildings. This vicious system, probably responsible in a higher degree than any other single cause for the decadence both spiritual and temporal of religious houses, was of early origin. We see it in the anxiety of Benet Biscop on his death-bed, depicted by Bede, lest his brother, a layman, should succeed him as abbot of Wearmouth.[1] It seems to have existed in England also just before Dunstan's monastic revival; and on the Continent, already in the late Merovingian and early Carolingian

[1] *Historia Abbatum.*

times, the practice was a common institution, a secular lord being made abbot on account of the political and military importance of the abbeys, due to their great territories. After the Conquest 'commendam' never found place in England, thanks to the kings, who resisted all attempts at introducing it; so that Wolsey was the single English commendatory abbot. On the Continent the institution was widespread and most pernicious. In the Empire it was not universal; in Italy, after being widely prevalent, it was successfully countered by the special constitution of the congregation of St Justina, devised expressly in order to render it impossible (p. 243); in France it was at its worst, becoming universal and going on right up to the Revolution. An idea of the workings of the system may be formed from Abbé Vanel's sketches of the commendatory abbots of Saint-Germain-des-Prés during the Maurist times—laymen, princes of the blood royal and an ex-king of Poland, and cardinals.[1]

Apart from the abuse of 'commendam,' the feudal system was probably the severest strain to which the monasteries have ever been subjected. Its effects on the abbots have been depicted already (p. 195); and if cases can be instanced, as there, in which it produced a really high type of abbot, a commanding figure in Church and State alike, and there were many such, there are also instances in which its results were altogether different. Some abbots, like some bishops, performed their military service in person: among the French prisoners at Crecy, along with two bishops was an abbot, who all evidently had taken part in the battle;[2] and I believe there is evidence that abbots of Farfa, a great Ghibelline centre near Rome, used to take part in fighting against the papal troops.

The feudal system affected abbots most directly, but it reacted on the communities. However, many of the glimpses we get of the inner life of Benedictine abbeys during the feudal period,—as those afforded us of two of the greatest English houses, by Jocelin of Bracklond in his domestic chronicle of

[1] *Les Bénédictins de S. Maur à Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, pp. 291-337. On Richelieu's twenty abbeys 'in commendam,' and the use he made of his position to strive to promote religious life in them, see Edmund Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, 'Richelieu and the Benedictines.'

[2] *Chronicle of Lanercost*, p. 329. The Latin is 'Abbas de Corbelle,' translated 'Corbeil'; but there was no abbey at Corbeil. Should it be Corbie?

St Edmundsbury under Abbot Samson at the end of the twelfth century,[1] and by the Durham writer's recollections of the life of the community of the cathedral monastery at the eve of the Dissolution,[2]—are very pleasing pictures of a dignified, regular, well-disciplined and thoroughly religious community life. If here again I have taken English examples, it is because they are those best known to me; no doubt they could be paralleled from continental sources. True it is that Edmund Bishop, than whom I believe no one in our day has been more qualified to draw such general conclusions on Benedictine history, declares that the Benedictines of England bore better than any others the strain of the feudal system, and emerged from the feudal period in a sounder condition in regard to things religious, intellectual, and temporal alike. Elsewhere, owing to the workings of the feudal system, to the prevalence of 'commendam,' from which evil the English houses were free, and to other disorders of the times, more felt on the Continent than in England, the monasteries, to take a general survey, had at the end of the fourteenth century been brought low.

## EPOCH IV (1418-1800)

### *The Council of Constance to the French Revolution*

It is often asked what event best marks the cleavage between the medieval and modern times. I cannot but think a good case might be stated for the Council of Constance; at any rate in Benedictine history it does mark the transition from the old to the new. The Council sat during 1414-1418. One of its chief preoccupations was to bring about a restoration of the spirit of the religious life in all the orders; and in all of them instantaneous and sustained responses were made to the desires of the Council, which but gave articulate utterance to the general sense of good men. In the Benedictine world arose immediately, in 1420, the Bursfeld reform and union, which soon embraced most of the principal monasteries

[1] Series 'King's Classics' (Chatto & Windus).

[2] *Rites of Durham*, Surtees Society. Cardinal Gasquet gives the principal passages in the introductory chapter, 'Monastic England,' to *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*.

of north Germany; it has been sufficiently described (p. 242). In south Germany a similar reform and union arose at the same time around the abbey of Melk on the Danube, and in Switzerland one around St Gall. In Italy in 1421 was formed the congregation of St Justina, called the Cassinese when it came to embrace all the Benedictine houses of Italy; its peculiarities of constitution have been described (p. 243). In Spain at the same time began a reform movement that centred in the abbey of Valladolid, and issued in a congregation embracing most of the monasteries of Spain.

Thus in the course of the fifteenth century were formed in most of the countries of western Europe Benedictine congregations, all of strict reformed observance, so strict as to be in many ways little in harmony with St Benedict's spirit. At the same time such a book as Johann Busch's *Liber de Reformatione Monasteriorum* reveals the magnitude of the evils that had to be countered in northern Germany before the Bursfeld reform and kindred reforms in other orders could make their way, and explains and in part justifies the rigid and austere spirit characterising the Benedictine movement in response to the Council of Constance. The writings of John Trithemius, abbot of Spanheim, at the end of the century, the most remarkable Benedictine of his time and one earnestly desirous of good things, show that the Bursfeld and other reforms had been only partially successful in renewing the life of the German monasteries, and that their general state left much to be desired.[1] Thus in spite of the efforts of the preceding century, when the Reformation broke out there still was enough found wanting in the religious houses, Benedictine and other, to give the Reformers one of their principal handles against the old religion.

It was reckoned that at this time there were some 1500 abbeys of Black Benedictines, and a vastly larger number of small houses, priories and cells; the Cistercian houses numbered 750. These monasteries were situated throughout the whole of Latin Christianity, not only in the dominant countries, already the Great Powers of western Europe, but in Denmark and Scandinavia, including Iceland and even Green-

[1] See his Addresses to the abbots assembled in chapter, and the *Liber lugubris de Ruina Monastici Ordinis.*

land, and among the Slavonic peoples belonging to the Latin Church, as Poland, and also very notably in Hungary.

The Reformation destroyed the monasteries in England and the Scandinavian lands, and throughout most of northern Germany, and the Wars of Religion and Thirty Years' War inflicted grievous losses in southern Germany and France. In the Catholic territories the regulations of the Council of Trent did much to restore and reinvigorate the monasteries. One of these regulations was that Benedictine houses exempt from episcopal jurisdiction should join together into congregations, thus definitely making the congregational system the law for Black Monks. Under this legislation arose in the seventeenth century a number of congregations, two of which, the Swiss and Bavarian, survive to this day. The English Congregation also was restored, just saved from the wreckage of the old Benedictinism of England. In the seventeenth century, too, were founded the great French congregations of St Vanne and St Maur, sufficiently spoken of in the preceding chapter. All the congregations of the time were on reformed lines. St Maur stands out conspicuous and singular among Benedictine congregations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the contribution it made to the well-being of religion and the church and of society by its labours in the field of ecclesiastical learning; besides, its educational work was greater and better than that of any other Benedictine congregation at the time. The quite small English Congregation made its contribution in the mission field in England and in its schools on the Continent to the preservation of the old faith in England. But of other Benedictines it must be doubted whether as much can be said. The monasteries went on with good observance, most of them, according to the Cluny tradition, mitigated, of much office and not much other work. It has to be said that proportionately to their number and opportunities, the output of good intellectual work, work of Maurist calibre, was disappointingly small. Edmund Bishop says that the abbey of St Blasien in the Black Forest, under Martin Gerbert, was 'the solitary instance of a sustained effort' at work of the Maurist type among the German monasteries. His summing up of the north German abbeys is of wider application—'piety and pontificality'—a surely inadequate interpretation

of St Benedict's idea.[1] Many of the Austrian abbeys had large schools or academies.

Evil days befel the Benedictines, as all other religious, at the end of the eighteenth century. The suppression of many monasteries in the Austrian dominions by Joseph II, the French Revolution, the secularisation of religious houses in those parts of Europe that came under Napoleon's influence —most of Germany, Italy, Spain—combined to bring it about that in the first years of the nineteenth century the total number of Benedictine monasteries was not more than thirty.[2]

## EPOCH V (1800-1914)

### *The French Revolution to the Great War*

The nineteenth century was for the Benedictines, as for all the orders, a period of reconstruction, of consolidation, and during its second half, of healthy and vigorous growth. In Austria, in Hungary, in Switzerland, some of the abbeys were speedily re-opened, the monks coming together again in their old homes as soon as circumstances made it possible. In Italy, too, and Spain a number of the abbeys were reconstituted. The English Benedictines, expelled from their houses in France, were able to keep two of the communities together and re-establish them in their native land. In Bavaria King Louis I interested himself in the restoration of some of the Benedictine houses in 1830 and the succeeding years, and he was himself the founder of the abbey of St Bonifaz with its noble basilica in Munich. Fresh starts were made in France by Dom Guéranger at Solesmes (1833); and in the Catholic parts of Germany by the brothers Wolter at Beuron (1863). From Bavaria in 1846, and from Switzerland in 1854, went forth colonies of monks to the United States, who established two flourishing congregations which now between them number twenty abbeys with 800 choir monks and 400 lay brothers. In 1851 was formed within the Cassinese congregation a province of Subiaco 'a primaeva observantia,' which in 1872 was made into an independent congregation. Its organisation has already been explained at some length, especially the

[1] *Liturgica Historica*, p. 460; the whole paper 'Abbot Stengel' is of great interest.

[2] This figure, thirty, is given by Heimbucher, *op. cit.* ed. 2, i, 325.

feature of its being definitely international in character, divided into five provinces (see p. 252). Here it will suffice to say that it has proved itself the most prolific of all the congregations, both by way of new foundations and of absorption of old houses. It has thirty-five abbeys and over 700 choir monks with 300 lay brothers.

Against this progress there are losses to be counted in the century. The revolutions in Spain in the thirties led to the closing of the monasteries: some have been re-opened. The process of the unification of Italy was accompanied by the suppression of religious houses, and the confiscation of their property; a small number of the Benedictine abbeys have been able to weather the storm and to maintain community life, among them Monte Cassino and Subiaco; also St Paul's *extra muros* at Rome, and La Cava, near Salerno, and Monte Vergine. French Benedictines have twice been exiled, and since 1902 their houses have been scattered in many lands.

Benedictine history in the nineteenth century is of much interest. It has been well told, up to 1880, by the late Dom Gilbert Dolan in a series of eleven articles, 'Succisa virescit,' in the *Downside Review*, 1880-1885. The facts, brought up to 1907, are given by Heimbucher, *op. cit.* §§ 38-40.

In 1880 was celebrated St Benedict's Fourteenth Centenary, and full statistics of the Black Monks and their monasteries were prepared. The monasteries in working condition were just under a hundred, the professed choir monks were 2080, the lay brothers 570. Similar statistics were made up in 1910. The monasteries were 140, the professed choir monks 4100, the lay brothers 1600.[1] Thus in thirty years the monasteries increased by 50 per cent. and the number of monks was doubled.

So things were in 1914. After a century of patient reconstruction and steady growth, the Benedictines had in great measure made good the losses of a hundred years ago, and seemed to have embarked on another period of prosperity and fruitful labour. Then the Great War broke out. What its effects on the Benedictines will be, and what the part they will be allowed to play in the New Era, must be reckoned among the uncertainties of the hour.

[1] The number of Cistercians is about the same as of Black Monks.

# CHAPTER XXII

## A BENEDICTINE ABBEY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE question of greatest import for Benedictines themselves and for others has been held over till this last chapter: What place is there for Benedictines in the modern world? Many who ungrudgingly recognise the great services they rendered in times past to religion, to civilisation, to society, say, perhaps regretfully, that their time of service is over, that they have made their contribution to the well-being of mankind, that the institute has played its part and done its work, and can no longer justify its existence in the twentieth century. Usually the answer is made to turn on an appeal to the external works done by Benedictines, the contributions they still make to the support of religion by pastoral work, education, writings. But this is to stake the thing on a false issue, for Benedictines do not exist for the sake of any good works; all their so greatly vaunted utilities have been bye-products.

Mr Workman makes the matter turn on the real issue, Renunciation; he holds that for many centuries past, ever since the Cistercian movement spent its force in the thirteenth century, Benedictine life has failed in renunciation.[1] If this judgement be true, if there be no genuine element of renunciation in modern Black Monk life, then indeed does it stand condemned, and no good works or utilities can redeem it. Certainly, if 'a club of celibate landlords under a rule'[2] has ever been an approximately adequate definition of any Benedictine community, that community had no justification for its existence. But it seems to me that Mr Workman emphasises quite unduly the physical side of renunciation, as if it demands literal destitution; whereas there may be real and substantive renunciation in a life without any great bodily austerity. He would agree, of course, that this applies to every well-lived

[1] *Evolution of the Monastic Ideal*, c. v. [2] Workman, *op. cit.* p. 337.

Christian life; into every life the spirit of renunciation must enter, and in most lives there are crises in which the path of mere duty can be followed only in virtue of a great renunciation. But he would say that, true though this is, when a manner of life is embraced which stands for renunciation not merely as a working necessity but as a principle, the renunciation should be a very real and tangible thing. This must be admitted. Let us see how it stands with ordinary unreformed Black Monk life of to-day.

First and foremost, the monk makes the three great renunciations of the religious vows: Poverty, Chastity, Obedience. Whatever views are held of a man's binding himself by such vows, it is agreed that they are very real and great renunciations of things desirable and good in themselves. Then the monk goes forth from his native place and his kindred and his father's house; gives up the legitimate ambitions of life, career, professional success, fortune, marriage, domestic life—the things that make up the great joys of life for men. The giving up all this is great renunciation. And if the monk finds compensations that make him happy through it all, that is only in accordance with the Gospel promise: 'There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, or lands, for My sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time.' Heights of renunciation are held forth in the *Following of Christ*, yet without calling for external destitution: indeed the author's manner of life was not one of great bodily austerity.

Even in the matter of austerity, though the life be not a penitential one, in any reasonably observant Benedictine monastery there are elements of austerity; and principally the early rising. In such monasteries the monks usually rise at some hour from 3.30 to 4.30: this is an austerity. It is also an austerity to spend perhaps three hours a day reciting or chanting the office in choir. In all, it may with truth be said that the life of a modern monk lived in a fairly observant monastery has got in it very real elements of renunciation and even of austerity, enough to save it from condemnation, even when judged by Mr Workman's standard.

So much for the individual; but what of the corporate life? The personal lives of the monks may have enough of

renunciation to justify them; but do Benedictine communities still serve a good purpose substantially the same as St Benedict's Monte Cassino? Is there in the modern world any place for Benedictine monasteries as such?

What follows will be more personal than anything that has gone before, just my own monastic 'Credo' as to what a Benedictine abbey might be in our day, and the place it might hold, and the function it might fulfil in the church life and the religious life of a country. It is an idealised picture of a Black Monk abbey living its Benedictine life in modern conditions, and making its characteristic historic contribution to men of the twentieth century.

In such a monastery the first place will be held by St Benedict's Work of God, to which nothing is to be preferred. We have heard Bishop Ullathorne say that 'the very heart of Benedictine life is the prolonged praising of God by the united voices of all the brethren' (p. 310). Abbot Tosti says of the recitation that it 'ought to be clear, sonorous, precise, and strong, without sighs; and, in the grandeur of its unison, which is more powerful than the charms of harmony, it forms an image of the onset of a serried host against the powers of darkness. A concordant psalmody is always a sign of peace in monasteries.'[1] The declarations of the English Congregation lay down the principle, 'As our primary function is to do on earth what the angels do in heaven, we should strive with fervent zeal to learn the Gregorian chant, without which we cannot perform this duty so that the hearers may be edified' (*Decl.* 16). This gives the office its due place in the life of the monastery, and insists on the fact that its worthy performance is the foremost conventual duty in the life of the house.

The entire canonical office was chanted in St Benedict's day and throughout the Middle Ages; now only portions are sung, the amount varying. Vespers are commonly sung daily in larger monasteries, and the conventual mass when it can be done. My own community determined to mark the Centenary year at Downside, 1914, by restoring the practice that had existed at Douai up to the expulsion in 1794, of singing the daily conventual mass; and certainly the difference it makes to the life of the community, and to the personal

[1] *San Benedetto*, Eng. trans., p. 118.

spiritual life of the monks, is something greater than could have been anticipated.

And so the first note of a Benedictine abbey in the twentieth century, and the first charge on the time and work of the monks, will be a dignified and stately presentation of the liturgical life of the Church.

In regard to the personal spiritual life of the monks, it must be recognised that Benedictine life is contemplative, at any rate in the sense explained at the close of chapter VIII (pp. 103-10), that is, be the monk's occupations what they may, he must bring into his life a sufficient element of prayer to make it fall under the definition there given of a contemplative life. For this a certain leisure for the pursuit of spiritual exercises is needed. Any who feel the attraction, should be left sufficiently free from imposed occupations to be able to spend in mental prayer the second half-hour daily that is pleaded for by Fr Baker.[1] Though the monk may work in the fields, he must not be an agricultural labourer; though he may teach in a school, he must not be a schoolmaster; though he may study, he must not be the mere student, wholly absorbed in his studies; though he be engaged in pastoral work, yet must it be in conformity with St Gregory's teaching that the pastor 'should not only be close to all by compassion, but hung aloft above all by contemplation,' thus carrying out the contemplative life no less than the active.[2] In other words, whatever his employments the monk should be a spiritual man.

In every monastery, after the Work of God, the most important work is the training and formation of the young monks. As has been seen in chapter XIII, the idea of the Benedictine Family implies that normally this should be carried out in its entirety, from clothing to ordination, in the monk's own monastery. This training demands a sound course of the regular ecclesiastical studies, at the least as thorough as is given in a good seminary to the students being prepared for the secular clergy. More important still is the formation of the young ones as monks. It is not enough to make them good religious, humble, obedient, docile, unselfish,

[1] *Sancta Sophia*, p. 463.

[2] *Regula Pastoralis*, ii, 5; see pp. 96-100, above.

devoted, pious, and the rest. They must be trained specifically as monks, as cenobites, men who are to live their life in community, to pray and work and die in community, and who look to the discipline of the monastic family life as the principal means of their sanctification; just as for married people the discipline of the married life is the principal means of sanctification.

We have seen Cassian's teaching on the 'actual life' (p. 47). According to St Benedict's mind the 'actual life' of his monks is the community life of the monastery, the 'persevering in the monastery till death' (Prol.); as the *Following of Christ* says: 'It is no small thing to dwell in a community, and to live therein without complaint, and to persevere faithfully till death' (i, 17). The training of the young monks should be aimed at preparing and fitting them for this permanent living in the round of duties whereof Benedictine community life is made up. It is not enough merely to impress forcibly this idea, this principle, upon them. They must receive the spiritual and intellectual and social formation that will make it natural and easy for them to pass their lives in the monastery contentedly, happily, and fruitfully, and will minimise the chances of their afterwards finding it unsatisfying, and so tiring of it and desiring change. So their intellectual tastes and capabilities should be sympathetically encouraged and carefully developed, and they should be prepared to take their part and find their satisfaction in some sphere of the life of the house. Too much care cannot be bestowed on the education of the young monks, for on them depends the future of the abbey.

The training and education of the young monks, who, in the average professions are three a year during the seven years of formation, will number about twenty, and the general administration in spirituals and temporals of a large monastery will absorb the activities of a dozen priests. But if the full liturgical life is to be carried out on the scale proportionate to the expectations raised by the idea of a Benedictine abbey of the first magnitude, a really large community is required, for whom suitable occupation has to be provided.

This brings us to the all-important side of the life, Work which is, and for many ages has been, the chief problem of

Black Benedictine life. Let us begin by going back to St Benedict. We have seen (chapter XVII) that he made the celebration of the divine office in choir the principal work of his monks. But the time he allotted to it did not much, if at all, exceed four hours a day. For the rest of the day he legislates as follows: 'Idleness is the enemy of the soul: therefore at certain times the brethren should be occupied in manual labour, and at certain hours in religious reading' (c. XLVIII). The times varied, but for most of the year about three and a half hours he assigns to reading, and to work rather more than six hours a day. Thus St Benedict looked on work and reading as essential elements in the life he planned, to each of which is assigned a very considerable portion of the time not spent in church. It is to be noted that in his eyes the frequentation of the choir and the performance of the round of strictly monastic and religious duties will not sufficiently fill a monk's life; nay, he says roundly that it will be an idle life unless long hours of the day are devoted to reading and to work.

This matter of work in the monastery has all through Benedictine history been the chief problem, the chief difficulty, and the chief failure in Black Monk life. For according to St Benedict's mind it should be, not recreation or occupation, but Work, serious laborious work, the obedience to the law of labour under which all men lie. And it was his mind that his monks, each one of them, and the community collectively, should make some serious contribution to the work of the world.

It is admitted now on all hands that, as Abbot Ford puts it, any kind of work, mental or manual, is suitable for Benedictines, provided only it is compatible with living in community and with the performance of the divine office in choir.[1] There is a difficulty in finding work that really is work and fulfils this condition of community life. St Benedict found it for his monks in field work and gardening; and certainly in the condition of Italy at the time the best contribution to the work of the world that they could have made was the bringing the devastated land under cultivation once more, and also the asserting the dignity of labour as the work of free men.

[1] Above, p. 312.

But agriculture passed out of use as the ordinary work of monks in the course of the eighth century, when they had become priests. A good substitute for manual labour was then found in the copying of books all through the Middle Ages, until the invention of printing. It was much exercised by the monks, and had all the qualities of monastic work: it was definitely manual labour; it was compatible with the tenor of the monastic life; it was laborious, painful, exacting, unexciting; it was a valuable contribution to the work of the world. But with the printing press the copying of books as such lost its utility and was discontinued. No substitute has since been found so generally applicable and combining so many advantages.

To speak of the work of monks in modern times, in our own day. It must be posited as a principle what Fr Baker lays down, that all works are equal if it be God's Will that we do them; this it is which gives them their dignity and their value.[1] Or, as a modern writer puts it: 'It doesn't matter what we do, so long as we've got to do it.'[2] Consequently, I say that there is no better life for a monk, priest though he be, if obedience should lay it on him, than one whereof the long spare hours are filled up, as St Benedict filled them up, with work in field or garden or workshop. This is the life of Trappist priests. I mean *work, toil:* a gentle weeding of flowerbeds or watering a greenhouse may be a good recreation for a monk, as for a city man, whose working day is otherwise filled up; but it would not be St Benedict's 'work'. To be this, it has to be genuine labour done for an appreciable number of hours each day. But this has long ceased to be the usual work of Black Monks.

Now that monks are priests, the duties of the pastoral office afford a suitable sphere of work; but unless the monastery be situated in a large town, as St Bonifaz at Munich, it will not offer work to the community, but only to three or four members of it. Some monasteries, notably Einsiedeln, are centres of pilgrimages; at Einsiedeln throughout the summer a large number of priests are wholly occupied in administering the sacraments to the pilgrims.

The best field of work for a community of monks has

[1] *Dame Gertrude More*, I, 246. [2] R. H. Benson.

usually been found in education; and this is why in modern times schools have commonly come to be attached to Benedictine monasteries. The advantages they afford are very great. The work is compatible with living in community; in any large monastic school a few of the monks must live among the boys, but the greater number of those engaged in the teaching and the working of the school are able to keep in touch with the life of the monastery, and to frequent a considerable number of the community exercises. Then it complies with St Benedict's admonition that monks ought to live on their own labour (c. XLVIII). Lastly, teaching stands the test of true work, both as a serious monotonous grind, involving very real physical fatigue, and as a useful contribution to the work of the world.

So much from the point of view of the monks. From the point of view of the boys, the education given must be of the best, well abreast of the highest educational standards of the day: otherwise a monastery is not justified in having a school. It follows that the monks must be properly equipped for the work of teaching.

It must needs be that a large modern school in a monastery will affect in various ways the life; the solitude and silence and recollection will not be the same. But Newman sees other aspects:

> While these oblates were but children, they were pretty much like other children; they threw a grace over the stern features of monastic asceticism, and peopled the silent haunts of penance with a crown of bright innocent faces. 'Silence was pleased,' to use the poet's language, when it was broken by the cheerful, and sometimes, it must be confessed, unruly voices of a set of schoolboys. These would sometimes, certainly, be inconveniently loud, especially as St Benedict did not exclude from his care lay-boys, destined for the world. It was more than the devotion of some good monks could bear; and they preferred some strict reform, which, among its new provisions, prohibited the presence of these uncongenial associates. But, after all, it was no great evil to place before the eyes of austere manhood and unlovely age a sight so calculated to soften and to cheer (*The Benedictine Centuries*, § 3; reprint, p. 119).

Moreover education does bring back into the life of the monastery that element of work which is one of the constituent

elements of the monastic life as designed by St Benedict. Indeed it may be thought that the work in modern times which is most conformable in character to St Benedict's agriculture is the cultivation of the minds and characters of the young, the eradication of faults, and the implanting of virtues and of knowledge.

And so in my abbey of the twentieth century there will be a school, even a large one, wherein lay-boys are being educated for careers in the world. But certain conditions are imposed. It is evident that the monk, with the obligations of the monastic life and the priesthood upon him, will not be able to teach for as many hours a day as a layman; consequently the school staff will have to be larger than that in ordinary schools. The school work should hold only the same place in the monk's life as did St Benedict's manual labour, and he should have the same proportion of time for the divine office and for religious exercises, and also the same leisure for private reading, religious or other, as St Benedict gives him. When these conditions can be secured, teaching may well be the life-work of a monk; and when it is combined with a frequentation of choir and the exercises of the monastic life, I can think of no more congruous and worthy life for a Benedictine. Thus the working of the school must be so organised that it do not interfere unduly with the personal spiritual life of the monks, nor with the order of the public life of the house as a Benedictine monastery. In order to secure this a large community will be needed.

The reader will perhaps be wondering why studies have not been named as the obvious modern equivalent for field-work. The reason is that the generality of Benedictines, as of other men, are not, never have been, never will be, students of the kind that can make of study a fruitful life-work. Except the two Maurist Paris houses, the communities of which were artificially formed for the purpose from immense reserves, there probably never has been such a thing as a community of 'learned Benedictines.' Such men are everywhere the exceptions. There is need of a quite special natural aptitude; there is need of long and careful training; there is need of intellectual gifts of a certain kind; and there is need of a peculiar character and temper of mind. Thus but a small

percentage of men, even of Benedictines, probably less than ten per cent., will be able to give themselves up usefully and fruitfully to the pursuit of learning, so that it cannot be so general a substitute as education in Benedictine life for the primitive manual labour. But for those Benedictine monks that have the qualifications probably no better substitute can be found.

But here again, it should be *work*, and it should be solidly productive, a contribution to the work of the world. That a monk should spend many hours a day reading biographies, even the Lives of the Saints, or history, even Church history, or the Fathers, or the Bible and the commentaries thereon, for his own instruction and edification—this will be St Benedict's 'reading,' but it will not take the place of his 'work.' Again, the writing occasional articles in magazines, or producing a volume of literary essays or verses, may be a very suitable form of recreation for a monk in his hours of repose; but it will not be his *work*.[1] To be Benedictine work worthy of the name, it must be laborious, patient, thorough, and scholarship in the best sense. In one of his Letters Lord Acton wrote: 'The Germans have a word, *Quellenmässig* = *ex ipsissimis fontibus*, and another, *Wissenschaftlichheit*, which is nearly equivalent to the Platonic ἐπιστήμη as opposed to αἴσθησις, δόξα, μνήμη, etc. When a book of theology, history, or any other science is destitute of these essential qualities, it belongs to a wholly different category, and, however meritorious it is in its proper sphere, is not treated or spoken of seriously. I might have Gibbon or Grote by heart, and I should yet have no real, original, scientific knowledge of Roman or Grecian history, though I might make a great show of it and eclipse a better scholar.'[2] It is precisely these qualities that gave the Maurist works their abiding value, and it is these qualities that should mark the studies of Benedictines that are to take the place of manual labour. This means laborious study and comparison of original sources, the Fathers, the early authorities for history; it means working among archives and records, transcribing documents, collating

[1] The same principle will apply to art or music; it must be work, not occupation or recreation.

[2] *Lord Acton and his Circle*, p. 55.

manuscripts—all of it painful, exacting, unexciting work. Any one who has done a day's collating knows how fatiguing it is. It is work such as this that it is worth while for Benedictines to do, for it is work such as this that has produced their great contribution to sacred learning.

There are certain conditions, limitations, to Benedictine work of the kind. It should be such as can for the most part be done at home. An excursion to libraries or archives may be necessary on occasion; but the work of a Benedictine should be such that when he comes back with the materials collected, he can go on with the work in the monastery, without its interfering with the tenor of his life or his assistance at the conventual exercises. I am in agreement with what Abbot Delatte says on this subject, that studies must not be the all-absorbing interest of the monk's life, and that 'intensive production' and 'the feverish collection of bibliographical fiches' are ill suited to the monastic temperament.[1] The Benedictine whose working hours are devoted to study must seek therein his sanctification, and so study as to make his studies not mere extras or adjuncts, but an integral part of his monastic and spiritual life, Cassian's 'actual life.'

A Benedictine may on occasion make contributions to current apologetics or controversy, but this will not be normal Benedictine work. Behind all really sound and effective apologetics or controversy must lie scientific work. In the realm of intellect, as in that of manufacture and commerce, the world is worked by science; just as the recent War was waged and won in the laboratories and closets wherein the specialists in physics and chemistry and electricity and mathematics were silently and out of sight experimenting and perfecting the machinery of victory. Similarly is it in the realms of thought; patient workers, whose 'studies are almost purposeless,' and 'pursued with chastity, like mathematics,'[2] advancing scientific work in the fields of church history, patristics, theology, philosophy, and the rest, must lay the foundations whereon the practical men, the controversialists and apologists, may build. Dom Besse, in the *Moine Bénédictin*, develops this line of thought in a telling passage:

[1] *Commentaire*, p. 353. [2] Acton, *loc. cit.*

After enumerating external activities of Benedictines, pastoral work, education, etc., he goes on: 'But it is not by these different works that the Benedictine order fulfils its most important duty in the face of the Church and of the world. Providence reserves for it another mode of action, namely the Apostolate of Science.[1] Leo XIII has laid this upon the order. Its zeal in walking along this path assures it in the midst of the Catholic army a special and an honourable place. It can only win it and hold it by untiring work. Intellectual work organised in a Benedictine monastery on the lines laid down by Mabillon in the *Études monastiques*, answers so well to the needs of actual science and to the methods in vogue, that the happiest results may be looked for from it. It has above all the immense advantage of work in common, which places extraordinary forces at the disposal of men of ability. This Apostolate is in our days an imperative necessity. To write in the newspapers, to put together articles for periodicals, to publish works of vulgarisation,—all this is important, but all this will never reach the object so greatly desired. It is necessary to look higher, and to carry the light of the faith to those intellectual summits whence the masses receive their ideas ready made. The future of the nations is really there; and it is there that the pulpit of Catholic Truth must be set up. It was still there in the seventeenth century. But in the middle of the following century the enemies of Christ resolved to overturn it. They succeeded only too well.' Since then, in spite of the individual efforts of eminent and fervent Christian scholars, science has remained dominantly rationalistic. 'This is a lamentable social misfortune, and the source of the errors that corrupt the public mind. Men devoted to the cause of Christ are bound to apply a speedy remedy. But the only efficacious one is to scale these heights, by forcing ourselves upon all by the sureness, the worth, and the extent of our scientific undertakings. Once masters of this situation, the monk and the priest can exercise around them an Apostolate truly consoling. Who would shut the door of his heart to men who clothe with conspicuous talents and with deep faith, a simple piety and an inexhaustible charity? Rationalism will count with such men, and will in the end recede before the splendour of Christian truth' (p. 249).[2]

[1] It is necessary to remember that the terms *science* and *scientific* are used not in the narrow English connotation, as equivalent to *physical science*, but in the larger sense whereby they embrace also history and erudition when pursued in a scientific spirit and according to scientific methods.

[2] Cardinal Mercier in an address entitled 'L'Isolement scientifique des Catholiques,' deplores the fact that Catholics live isolated in the scientific world, and declares that 'this state of intellectual isolation is fatal to faith, and a loss to science' (*Le Christianisme dans la vie moderne*, p. 31).

It is strange that the religious value and the practical utility of Benedictine intellectual work of the kind is less appreciated among Benedictines than by the Rulers of the Church. Others of course are applying themselves to such work; but outside of Benedictine circles it is recognised that there is in Benedictine life something in a special way congenial to these studies, which in favourable conditions produces scientific work of an unusually high order. And so popes have called on Benedictines to revive the spirit and methods of work of the Maurists, notably Leo XIII. And Pius X entrusted to Benedictines a piece of work of thoroughly Maurist scope and character, akin to that of Sabatier and his collaborators, the critical restoration of the text of St Jerome's Latin Bible. It is remarkable that this pope, above all a practical pastor of souls, should have thought it good to withdraw Abbot Gasquet, as he then was, from his more immediately practical historical work in England, and devote him with a group of Benedictine scholars to a long and laborious work of pure erudition, which when accomplished cannot have any very important 'practical' results for religion or theology; and that he should have himself contributed a large sum of money, and encouraged contributions, for such a purpose. It is an impressive assertion of the value of truth even in minutiae, and of the importance of science.

So much for recent popes. Cardinal Rampolla was not pope; but he was very near it, and probably no one in our day has had a wider outlook on the needs of religion and the Church. I was privileged to have an interview with him in 1913, and his parting words to me were an exhortation to use all my influence for the promotion of good historical studies among my monks.

Every Benedictine abbot has probably in his community some, a small number it will be, perhaps three or four of the young monks, who have the aptitude for such work. If we are to believe those highest in authority in the Church, we can do no better service to religion than by giving them the education, the training, and above all the leisure that is needed for the pursuit of such studies. They cannot be carried on in time saved from other employments; they must be for those that pursue them, St Benedict's 'work.' If a monk is to

work to good purpose in this sphere, if he is to produce Benedictine work, he must be destinated to it, as other monks are to pastoral work or teaching. There must be some self-denial, some faith, in the abbot, for the men capable of this work are usually such as would be useful in the other works of the house. We abbots should try to realise what it would mean for the world were there in all the great abbeys a small group of monks devoted to higher Benedictine study in its various phases.

And so the Benedictine Abbey of the Twentieth Century, as I see it in my mind's eye, would have as the centre of its life a noble church, wherein the praises of God are chanted with care and solemnity, as their first work, their first love, by a large body of monks, men who in their private lives seriously cultivate personal religion and the life of prayer. For this some moderate leisure for reading and meditation is necessary, and their occupations must be so co-ordinated as to secure it. For their external work, some of the monks carry out the spiritual ministrations of the district in which they are, and some on occasion go out to give retreats or preach missions. Most of the younger priests find their work in carrying on the lay school attached to the abbey; or if, as is often the case, circumstances make it impossible to have a school, it will be necessary to provide some corporate work of research on an extended scale in which several will be able to take part. Gibbon appreciated work of the kind; criticising the inactivity of the Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford, in his day, he says:

> The shelves of their library groan under the weight of the Benedictine folios, of the editions of the Fathers, and the collections of the Middle Ages, which have issued from the single abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés at Paris. A composition of genius must be the offspring of one mind; but such works of industry as may be divided among many hands, and must be continued during many years, are the peculiar province of a laborious community. If I inquire into the manufactures of the monks of Magdalen, if I extend the inquiry to the other colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, a silent blush or a scornful frown will be the only reply (*Autobiography*). It is to be feared that his rebuke is applicable to other monks besides those of Magdalen.

In this abbey there will be, too, a group of students, probably a small one, pursuing in thoroughly scholarly fashion some branches of ecclesiastical science, not only in the departments of erudition and history, but in those that nowadays exercise the minds of intellectual men. Thus there will be some who *know* at first hand the actual questions of biblical criticism, and of comparative religion, of science, of philosophy, including the moderns, and can discuss with knowledge and understanding the systems of Spinoza, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and the others, who do keep men away from Christianity. Others there will be who have made a study of the great social problems that loom so big in the modern world—questions of economics, of political theory, of ethics.

Were there such a Benedictine abbey, where religious men could be found able to minister to the modern mind diseased, it would be a centre of religion to which educated men, Catholic and other, would flock, not necessarily for set 'retreats,' but for times of refreshment religious and intellectual, to take part in the services for a few days and to exchange ideas with some one that has quietly thought out those problems that are at the root of all apologetics and controversy.

These are ideals: but let us have ideals! The higher the ideals and the more clearly they are grasped, the fuller will be the actual realisation. And if Benedictines will be true to the principles of their Rule and the great traditions of their history, I do not think that very substantive realisations of such ideals are out of reach. Certain it is that a Benedictine abbey that even in some good measure realises the ideal here set forth, has still its place and its use in the twentieth century.

Yet must we not lose sight of the fundamental principle of monasticism, that the real use of a monastic house lies not in activities and usefulnesses. It lies rather in things that cannot be counted by statistics or estimated by results. A recent Oxford Professor of Church History has said finely that 'if society is to be permeated by religion, there must be reservoirs of religion, like those great storage places up among the hills which feed the pipes by which water is carried to every home in the city. We shall need a special class of

students of God, of men and women whose primary and absorbing interest it is to work out the spiritual life in all its purity and integrity,' to give themselves up to 'the pursuit of religion in itself and by itself.'[1] This is the essential function of monasteries and monks, this their most real contribution to the well-being of the Church and of society—that a monastery be a 'reservoir of religion,' and its monks men primarily absorbed in 'the pursuit of religion.' The good works and utilities will surely follow; but they are bye-products. 'The Benedictine Rule aimed at making good men and left the question of their usefulness to God; it is, perhaps, just because they denied themselves the satisfaction of aiming at usefulness that they were so greatly used.'[2] A great monk in our own day has put it in another way: 'Perhaps the less a monk thinks about converting the world and the more he thinks about converting himself, the more likely will it be that the world will be converted.'[3]

And so Benedictines will do well to realise that the value, religious and other, of our contribution to the New Era unfolding itself before us will be proportionate to our fidelity to the basic and permanent principles of our Rule; proportionate to the fulness with which we receive those first words our Holy Father speaks to us:

OBSCULTA O FILI PRAECEPTA MAGISTRI
ET ADMONITIONEM PII PATRIS
LIBENTER EXCIPE
ET EFFICACITER COMPLE

[1] Bigg, *Wayside Sketches*, p. 135.
[2] Canon Hannay, *Spirit of Christian Monasticism*, c. viii, and *Wisdom of the Desert*, pp. 24-29.
[3] Bishop Hedley, Preface to Abbot Tosti's *St Benedict*, p. xxiii.

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